

no.61 the magazine of cinema & television fantasy 95p

# STARBUCKS™



## SPECIAL INTERVIEW ISSUE

FEATURING

**CARRIE FISHER**

STAR WARS PRINCESS NO LONGER

BLUE THUNDER CREATORS

**JOHN BADHAM**

DIRECTOR

PLUS REVIEWS OF

**RETURN OF THE**

**JEDI PSYCHO II**

**OCTOPUSSY**

**STEPHEN KING**

TOP SELLING HORROR AUTHOR

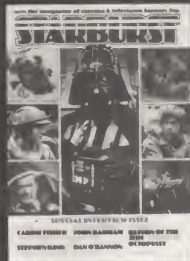
**DAN O'BANNON**

SCREEN WRITER

AND LOTS MORE!



OCTOPUSSY



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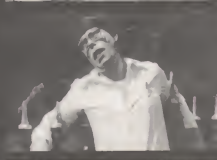


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HOLLISS.

## MISCONCEIVED REMARKS

After reading John Brosnan's clever-dick review of *Silent Running* in *Starburst* 58 I could restrain myself no longer and simply had to write.

Can he be serious? I ask myself... discussing such irrelevancies as "the shortage of oxygen" on Earth and whether or not the planets' temperature would allow for "climatic changes." The basic problem is that your "resident wizard of Oz" is clearly confusing the film with reality.

I happen to be one of those many people who were delighted by "the cute little robots", and *Silent Running*, despite Mr Brosnan's misconceived remarks, remains one of my favourite films.

Susan Walters,  
Meesteg,  
South Wales.

## FAMILIAR FRIDAY - 3D

Do you want a list of the scenes in *Friday* the 13th Part 3 that I recognised? Good, because here it is:

*Psycho's* shower scene (without the messy dispatch of the occupant.)

*Blade Runner's* head crushing scene, (the eyeballs would not shoot out, but because of the optic nerve holding them back they would just squelch out and dangle).

*The Shining's* axe attack on an innocent door.

The van stalling, leaving the heroine at the mercy of the villain, as in *Med Max*.

Potter's concept of "just when you think it's over it starts up again."

And many more such as "trapping the killer's hand in the car window" and "the knife coming up through the bed and the person on it" which I have seen in too many films to mention.

The selling point of this film is 3D, and we are never allowed to forget it.

Also, as with *The Entity*, I found myself knowing exactly what was going to happen next. However enjoyable a gimmick *Friday* the 13th Part 3 is, I sincerely hope it is not a typical example of the 3D movies that are to follow.

C. Perkes,  
Tunstall,  
Stoke-on-Trent.

## POOR OLD DARTH

I look forward eagerly to your coverage of *Return of the Jedi*. I have been a *Star Wars* fan for years and I think that *Jedi* looks the best of the lot.

However, I was furious to learn that, after playing Darth Vader for six years, Dave Prowse's face was not the one seen when the dying Sith Lord finally takes his mask off. Instead, the face of a 78-year-old actor! Taking into account his age, and Luke's age, Darth Vader, who was, after all, Luke's dad, must have been about 55 when Luke was born. Which not only sounds improbable, but ridiculous. Taking into account Dave Prowse's age, Vader would have been about 23 when they were born, which sounds much more feasible. Surely it would have been far more moving and original if Dave Prowse's somewhat more youthful face was seen. After all, if Vader died aged 45 or so, we would

all feel much sorer for him than an 80 year old Vader who was going to go sooner or later anyway. I certainly don't blame Mr Prowse for being amazed at this - I would call it a betrayal.

While on the subject, I have seen 4 Carrie Fisher, 4 Mark Hamill and 7 Harrison Ford interviews so far. I haven't seen one on the man who played dear old Darth Vader. Can you rectify this, please?

Issue 57 was mainly concerned, distressingly enough, on yecchy films, all gore and no plot. I disagree with you over *Tenebrae* - it looks, frankly, disgusting. In my opinion, the only really grisly film that made a classic with a weak plot was *Alien*.

I was irritated to read, in issue 57 "Dr. Strangelove, or How I learned to stop worrying and love the Bomb". Reagan's fave movie? Stop these nasty little left-wing insinuations creeping into a great fantasy mag, please. Let's see something free of such remarks - *Starburst* being the last place I expect to find them.

Sarah Bowes,  
Caterham,  
Surrey.

"Left wing insinuations?" We don't know what you mean. Neither *Starburst* nor its writers have any politics - other than the fact that we're for democracy and freedom on speech. And that's all we have to say on that subject!

## MILLER KILLER

As we all know *Starburst* magazine does its best to keep up with new releases of films all around the world. But, in your recent issue you forgot to mention the two new schlock-horror films making big bucks in America. I am, of course, talking about *Miller Killer* and *Spit On Your Knave*.

*Miller Killer* concerns a young employee of "Sunny Bread" which is the biggest bread company in America. The young man returns home one night to find not his wife and two kids asleep in bed, as he had thought, but three loaves of bread on the table. Next to them is a message, it reads:

"Sorry about the family, we were experimenting with a new bread and they heard too much, we had to shut them up." This sends him into a mad frenzy and he swears to kill every miller working for the company.

*Spit On Your Knave* revolves around a vicious card game, but this game is played with people, not cards. Peter Brooks was a 7 of Clubs, until they cut the pack. Horribly disfigured, Brooks claims revenge by "calling" them at their own "game".

Otto, the Auto-pilot

Thanks for the info, Otto, although *Miller Killer* sounds really crummy (we doubt it'll make much dough), but we hear! *Spit on your Knave* (a project which has been on the cards for a long time) has already made a great deal in America. By the way, we thought the acclaim for your performance in *Airplane* was really inflated.

## STAR WARS - RETURN OF THE CRITICS

This is a letter I thought I'd never have to write.

On June 1st I was among those lucky ones who saw the *Star Wars* triple bill, which gave me a good opportunity to compare Lucas' latest magnum opus in the light of the first two chapters of the saga.

I've always considered myself an open-minded person always ready to suspend disbelief, but this time it was too much, Lucas was pushing it in *Empire* with a two foot muppet as spiritual guidance, he just about succeeded, but *Return of the Jedi* has fallen foul of that terrible disease called twoness coupled with an unhealthy dose of self-indulgence. Lucas had already dropped warning signs in a *Starlog* profile last year about how the saga was just a fairy tale and he hoped that people wouldn't be upset about how he wrapped the trilogy up. Well, you certainly upset this person, George, I waited three years for this?

Let me make a few direct references to *Jedi*: Fact 1. You never parody your own conventions and characters, this is dangerous to the point of suicidal. Humour was always an important part of the saga, but this time the characters mock themselves. The whole sequence in Jabba's palace comes over as a bad case of the Muppets meet Godzilla.

Fact 2. An audience is prepared to accept so much dramatic liberty. There is no attempt made at explaining where all the different alien battle fleets have sprung from, since when was the rebel fleet this large?

Fact 3. There is no point in carefully setting up the characters of Lando and Yoda if you don't use them. All we see of Lando is a few heroic deeds whilst Han is rescued then he's relegated to flying the Falcon for the rest of the film. Yoda has a walk-on-and-drop-dead part, and what about Boba Fett? Fett is given just enough time to show that all his gadgets do work then he's killed off. All this leads the audience to a big So What.

Fact 4. Cute, furry little teddy bears are a dangerous gamble, the last thing you should do is play on their cuteness. The whole Ewok section is sickening, syrupy and sweet. Lucas has said that he aimed *Star Wars* at the thirteen year olds, this is aimed at one year olds and people with brain damage.

Fact 5. I think that *Jedi* has got to have the

worst filmic ending for the last twenty years. Surely the happy-ever-after ending could have been played a little straighter.

Having said all this there are a few good points. The special effects are the finest ever conceived. The Luke-Vader-Emporer triangle is played nicely with just the right epic touches. The Luke-Leia relationship is resolved in a suitably Shakespearean tradition. Finally the gung gung a chance to show they can act, which must have been hard considering some of the banal lines they had to speak.

*Jedi* is a roller coaster out of control. It goes too fast with so many dips and curves that you either fall off or throw up. When the ride is over you're left with a bad feeling and the thought that the ride could have been so much better. *Jedi* should have been the best chapter yet. In many ways it is the worst.

To all other *Star Wars* fans out there I say this, go and see *Jedi* by all means and enjoy yourselves but just ask yourselves this: Why film should have been the best it isn't, why not when they had every opportunity to get it right.

Mark Burman,  
Palmer Green,  
London.

I emerged from the cinema with my mind so full of images, ideas and opinions that I clutched the nearest pen and decided to air my views on Lucas film's latest epic: *Return of the Jedi*.

A lot of the fun of this picture was discovering the fact that there still exists something that will make people in Britain get up at an ungodly hour (for the showing I attended) and actually queue along the streets for anything between 1-3 hours. I managed to rise at 7 o'clock in the morning in order to get to the cinema before the queue became unbearably long. I realised I was in for a good time when cheering and clapping accompanied the 20th Century Fox logo and fanfare and the Dolby Stereo sound boomed through the auditorium.

The effects (opticals) in this picture are on a grand scale. For the most part, particularly scenes concerning the Imperial fleet, there is a greater feeling of immense size and scale





than anything seen before. It was difficult to tell whether the shuffling Imperial scouts (you know, the sawn-off ATAT Walkers) in the forests of Endor were actually model work or not.

Once on Tatooine, there is a great deal of initial fascination in seeing those old familiar characters reappear one-by-one. Leia's appearance in particular, is very clever. The first half-hour of the movie, concerning Jabba and his cohorts, is a constant barrage of weird and wonderful creatures that are a wonder to behold. Norman Reynolds' production design is unlike anything seen previously. The new characters, in particular Bib Fortuna, Salacious Crumb, Jabba, Admiral Ackbar and the fabulous Gamorrean guards are so un-human and totally convincing that it is difficult to convince oneself that Lucas' casting director hasn't merely shipped them in to Ettiore on the last shuttle from a galaxy far, far away. Solo's release from carbon freeze is dramatic and satisfying (why wasn't he bearded?) showing, for the only brief moment in the film, some of Harrison Ford's great acting talent (remember Deckard from *Blade Runner*). Leia is initially a dark and mysterious character, but Hamill, in an attempt to show the growing maturity of Luke Skywalker (as he did to great success in *Empire*) rather goes over-the-top in *Jedi*. He remains extremely stone-faced throughout the entire film, looking as though he should be on stage playing Macbeth. As to poor old Harrison, he jovially wisecracks his way throughout the entire movie with that fabulously characteristic grin and a few words of banal dialogue that for 95% of the time seem ad-libbed. (Don't ask where the other 5% came from).

One of the greatest errors in this picture is the too-great an emphasis that has been placed on humour. Not only that it is present, but that it is prolonged. Han hanging upside-down from the hovercraft beside Jabba's sail-barge while half-blind in an attempt to rescue Lando works well, but once those Ewok teddy-bears appear, the movie lapses into a great deal of banality. How Han Solo, Princess Leia and a small group of Rebels can

outwit the Emperor's crack stormtrooper squad and half a dozen Imperial Scouts with the help of two hundred teddy-bears armed with clubs and sticks is quite beyond me! During the scene in which C-3PO announces to the gang that they are about to become the main course of an Ewok banquet, and 3PO himself goes floating around. I found myself saying: "Get on with the plot - that's what matters!"

Wicket's rocket bike ride through the Endor forest in order to decoy the stormtroopers really is hitting the bottom of the barrel. This lapses into a kind of gilly humour that is *Star Wars* equivalent of Bond's *Moonraker*.

The Emperor gets my vote for the most anemic-looking character in the movie. In fact, the greatest emotional intensity comes in two key scenes of *Jedi*. The first is the Emperor's attempt to tell Luke with his General-200-like lighting-from-the-fingerprints.

A major fault in *Jedi* lies in the soap-opera elements within the screenplay. Lucas can only be blamed for this and the constant bombardment of "Is Darth Vader my father?" made me at times wonder if I was watching an extra-terrestrial episode of *Dallas* rather than an SF/fantasy adventure with a \$2.5 million-dollar budget. After Jabba had been dispatched into oblivion, it almost seems as though Lucas, Kasden, Marquand and co realised they only had about an hour to tie-up ten zillion loose ends offered up in *Empire*. An example of this is Luke's lightning visit to Dagobah and his encounter with Yoda. A five second conversation with the dear old Jedi master and... BANG! He drops dead. In all seriousness, this is the second key scene of emotional intensity, and an extremely touching scene too. Frank Oz's manipulation of Yoda reaches absolute perfection in *Jedi* (wise up Mr Brosnan!). The expressions and emotion conveyed through the face of this little but great creature are faultless! Sorry to see you go, old friend!

As said before, acting and dialogue are rather superficial. Surprisingly, the best performance of the picture comes from Carrie Fisher. Her initial encounter with the little Ewok, Wicket, is quite charming, reminiscent of Luke's first meeting with Yoda in *Empire*.

The most exciting visuals in the movie occur in the forest sequence, namely the rocket bike chase. This technique of using a Panaglide camera and "space-framing", ie, walking along the forest floor and shooting one or two frames per second, works to great effect in *Jedi*, as does the stunning final sequence as Lando pilots the Falcon down the Death Star shaft.

The Luke-Vader duel was old-hat. We've seen it all before in *Empire* - and it was superior then, too. In fact, the tears well-up not with Vader's/Mr Skywalker's parting words to Luke, but the sight of young Luke dragging this once-mighty figure across the ground in a black heap. It was literally on the edge of the seat with anticipation as Luke slowly removed the helmet. Never thought I'd be sorry to see him go!

The final image of Yoda, Ben and Luke's Daddy in better days is embarrassingly corny, together with the "all-smiles" epilogue. However, I suppose this was the only possible way to conclude.

The special effects must be the greatest ever seen at the cinema since the beginning of time (excepting perhaps *Blade Runner*) and I don't agree with some people in saying

that they dominate the picture. Rather, they enhance, being an integral part of the story, the excitement and the visual aspect of the film. However, as has been said many times, Lucas has rather become a victim of his own success, as we've seen countless dogfights in space since 1977, what with *Galactica*, *Buck Rogers*, *Battle Beyond the Stars*, etc.

John Williams' score I'm sure is, as always, wonderful. I say "I'm sure" because it gets the vote for "the most difficult to hear" score in any movie I have witnessed. The picture is literally so fast and loud, that Mr Williams' symphonic masterpieces are drowned out by the explosions, unlike *Star Wars* or *Empire*. Oh well, wait for the soundtrack album!

Richard Marquand said that he preferred the surface naivety of say, Lucas' direction rather than Irvin Kershner's sophisticated approach, and this, I think, is where he went wrong. *Empire* succeeded, particularly in the case of Luke, in adding that all-important dimension to the two-dimensional characters portrayed in *Star Wars*. In parts, the "naivety" succeeds greatly, particularly in the dazzling first half-hour of the film, which is its greatest part. Here, Marquand captures beautifully the essential elements of anticipation (will they get Han out of carbon freeze?), excitement (Luke's battle with the pit creature and the fabulous duel around the sail barge), and wonder (the introduction of myriads of weird and wonderful creatures). The remainder of the film is inferior as the emphasis seems to be on, for most of the time, over-the-top humour and banal dialogue, in the case of the romance between Luke, Leia and Han.

Don't get me wrong. I loved *Jedi*. It is a wonderful, fast, furious, breathtaking, exciting picture. It just doesn't get the full 100%. It's in the 80s, though!

Mark Talbot-Butler,  
Sandiway,  
Cheshire.

Having so far seen the latest in the *Star Wars* saga, *Return of the Jedi*, for the second and not the last time I have decided to put ink to paper and let you know what I think of it. The first time I saw it was at the special *Star Wars* Triple Bill on the 1st June at the Leicester Square Theatre and I will not discuss it in detail suffice to say that a very good time was had by all marred only by some amercé Lucas' decision to show some adverts just before screening *Return of the Jedi*.

Firstly, *Star Wars - A New Hope* will always be very special to me for various reasons but I think that this new chapter of the saga could well take the number 1 position from *ET*.

The film had my full attention from the opening frames right through to the end credits sequence. I found it to be so rich in detail that on viewing it for the second time I was surprised to discover how much I'd missed the first time. The film-makers have really done themselves proud; with *Jedi*, it seems that they've put in everything but the kitchen sink! Just as the cantina scene in *Star Wars* has been "burned" in to the memory, the grotesque Jabba the Hutt's palace will leave a similar mark. These scenes are perhaps the most frightening to be seen in a *Star Wars* film.

The speeder bike chase I had me on the edge of my seat so to speak, the impression of speed in this sequence was very skillfully conveyed indeed. I had my doubts about how realistic the Ewoks would be in the Endor

sequences and to some extent my fears were realised with the appearance of the first Ewok we see (Wicket). I felt that this scene with Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) was too long. However, the other Ewok sequences were more effective and believable because our attention was not so much on scrutinising the costumes but on what they were saying.

The space battle was yet another masterpiece of special effects, the smooth rounded contours of the rebel cruisers contrasting with the solid and menacing lines of the Empire's battle cruisers. They used old footage of world war two dogfights to choreograph the battle scenes in the first film but what could they use to choreograph the battle scenes in the new film? I've never ever seen anything like it before in my life. TIE fighters, X-wings, Y-wings, B-wings and the Millennium Falcon zipping in and out of frame, here, there and everywhere you care to look. It has to be seen to be believed.

Solid performances came from all concerned, particularly from Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker, last of the Jedi knights and David Prowse as Darth Vader in the all important confrontation scenes where each attempts to turn the other to the good side, the one to the dark side of the force. I thought these scenes to be extremely gripping and almost shouted out "NO!" when Luke lost control and went dangerously close to the dark side.

The ending is rather sentimental, perhaps even corny but I live it and it means everyone leaves the cinema with a smile on their face. Apart from all the fun in *Jedi*, I think there are two places which are sad. One involving Yoda, the other quite surprisingly involving Darth Vader which is in my view due to the effectiveness of the script, steady development of the main characters and good performances from the actors and good use of body language from David Prowse to convey the conflict within Darth Vader.

I look forward to seeing chapters 1-3, provided of course that George Lucas and Co wish to make them.

Incidentally, I also want to see the film *Android* and enjoyed it immensely. It just has to be one of the most amusing and original comedies of recent times. The actor Max as the android Max 404 being suitably awkward and foolish looking, but what is his real name?

I look forward to reading your coverage of *Jedi* and comments on the film. I suppose John Brosnan will review it, still he can't complain that Yoda takes up too much time! I for one don't think that the philosophy of the Force gets in the way of the story.

John Yux Tak Lau,  
Liverpool,  
Merseyside.

Thanks for your interesting comments on *Return of the Jedi*, John. We take it you liked the film, yeah? On your question regarding the actor who plays Max 404 in *Android*, we asked our new know-all contributor, Sally Gray M.D. and she identified him as Don Oppen. If other readers have any queries about anything relating to cinema and television fantasy Or *Jedi* is the person to write to, care of Starburst, and she will dig into her large filing cabinet in search of the answer. The most interesting questions will be printed in our forthcoming column, with a prize for query of the month!



## LIFT OFF!

Never heard of Dick Maas? You will. He's my main discovery at Cannes. Last year: Sam Raimi. This year: Dick Maas, 32, graduate of Amsterdam's Film Academy, director of shorts and rock promos - one for a song called "Twilight Zone", released alongside the Floyd's *Wall* film in Holland last year. Now he's made a feature. *The Lift*. A cracker. Woody Allen's nightmare come true. A lift that kills. Though not indiscriminately. Kids survive... Dick is likely to be hailed as Holland's Spielberg any day. In some instances (his family sequences), that's true. I hope it doesn't ruin his head. We saw what happened when fame does that at Cannes, too, with the second film from the *Diva* maker. Traa-gic! I'll be reviewing *The Lift* later (it opened in Holland on... wait for it, Ascension Day). This has been a trailer...

## CANNES AT 36

I missed Mel Gibson, the Pythons, avoided Mary Steenburgen, lost Robert Duval! (and was offered John Wayne Jr in his place!) but lunched with Cheech and Chong, breakfasted with Gordon Liddy and Timothy Leary (Leach and Long), walked the streets with John Sayles, found Laurence Landon and saw Sophia Loren and Orson Welles. (Have you heard the one about Orson Welles designer jeans?) I missed the three Salkind planes flying high with streamers screaming about *Superman III* (which is the last and really *Supes* all over again with Robert Vaughan as Gene Hackman, Richard Pryor as Ned Beatty), but I did duck from a Salkind squadron of nine planes plugging... *Santa Claus*. They must be worried about Canada's *Father Christmas* project...

So it goes at the Cannes festival - a very wobbly 36 years old this year. You can usually find something for everyone. On show. On sale. This year it was damned difficult to find anything worth the viewing - never mind, as most cine-visitors must, the buying. After the high of last year's *E.T.* climax, Cannes '83 was less fulfilling. Less... everything. An event without an event. Except, thank the galaxies, on the *Starburst* beat.

Despite a load of predictable rip-off dross (Conan clones are out, *Mad Maxes* are in), two fantasies stood out. Holland's *Lift* - and the American *Spanish Hundra*, a shtetle Conan with some very fetching knobs on as portrayed by luscious Laurence Landon. She ports Sandahl Bergman, every Sybil Danning in the shade. Both films were so good for so good compared with the rest. Warner Brothers snapped 'em up. Well, it has to make up for losing out on *Supergirl* for Britain.

Then, as another prime example of how our movie marvels brighten Cannes, there was the night of Friday the 13th...

## GENRE NIGHT

The azure-coloured invitation was for "an America/Brazilian Festa" (Portuguese for "Fiesta") on the Gray D'Albion beach.

If you're lucky at Cannes, you get a bucketful of such invites. Lunches. Dinners. Late night parties. In hotels, on beaches or yachts. I even had one this year to an American breakfast: coffee, orange juice if you could locate it

**It's that time of the year again. In May '83, thousands of movie folk gathered by the Riviera to make deals, swap lies and give each other awards. Our European correspondent TONY CRAWLEY was on the spot and monitored the changes and the cliches with an experienced rather than jaundiced eye.**



Film makers assemble at this year's Cannes Film Festival. Pictured here, left to right, are Andrew Geroni (Maniac Producer), Richard Rubenstein (Producer for George Romero's films), William Lustig (Maniac Director), Paula Bartel (Director of the 1975 cult fantasy film *Death Race 2000*), Irvin Shapiro, Sandy Tung, George Nierenberg and Sam Raimi (Director of *The Evil Dead*).

LE NOUVEAU FILM-EVENEMENT DE

# RIDLEY SCOTT LEGEND

## SCOTT'S LATEST

Ridley Scott might have trouble in joining Hill's party, as well as Scorsese. Ridley has lately announced his next film - *Legend*. Peter Beale produces the film as one of the first ten projects put into motion by the new production boss of 20th Century-Fox, Joe Wizan. (Another of his choices: *Second Chance* with, gulp, *gulp*, Travolta and Olivia Newton-John).

How does Joe choose 'em? "There is no

real policy - it has to be simply my choice, my taste," he says. "I suppose I'd use the old movie phrase: 'Make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, scare 'em a little. I like real movies, big screen things that really stir your emotions. The whole point about movies is that they play on larger canvases than TV and you need subjects to match that... like *The Return of the Jedi*. Richard Marquand has done a marvellous job of directing and it's also a very human film. You really come away from it with a sense of awe.

and a sliver of corned-beef on toast. Not quite the American breakfast I'm used to at the Hyatt Regency in Los Angeles.

It's impossible to go to all the events. They clash with movies or interviews, get-togethers with writer pals unseen since Cannes '82 or just plain sixty winks (inflation hits everywhere) on the hotel bed between the myriad "things-to-do" of the non-stop fortnight fiesta that is (or used to be) Cannes. The "festa" I went to, though. *Definitely!* Well, Irvin Shapiro's *Films Around The World* combine was throwing the shindig and where the grand old Irv' is, his people gather around him. And a lot of his people are our people.

Come to that, dear old Irv, himself, well into his seventies now, is our people. His current company is an off-shoot of the one he founded in New York in 1932. His fifty-plus movie career covers everything from bringing *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919) to America and selling *Creepshow* and *Evil Dead* to the world. Beat that, Lord Lew! A cliché comment or not, they don't make film folk like Irv Shapiro anymore.

Sure enough, within eight minutes of hitting the beach, I found myself in the midst of what seemed to be a Marvel Comic Convention. There was Paul Bartel, with his tanned, bald head gleaming in the late evening sun. (Britain, I gather, was then into its 31st successive day of rain. Shame!) There was Andrew Geroni and William Lustig, producer and director of *Maniac* (1980), if you'll pardon the expression - and likewise of *Vigilante*. There was George Romero's producer-partner, Richard Rubenstein. Behind him, Sam Raimi was back in the town that made his name for him last year and this time with his partner, Robert Tapert, in tow...

It was, by the way, Friday the 13th and at midnight most of us trooped off to a special screening of Sam's *Evil Dead* or to the French *Creepshow* party. Do I have to tell you which I went for? With so much good pix unveiled this year at Cannes, I chose the movie, of course.

There, too, was Harley Korkis, politely putting me right about an Avoniz festival paragraph in *Starburst* 57. There was Doug Curtis, co-producer with John Carpenter of *The Philadelphia Experiment*, which Harley helped script but won't direct as I suggested/hoped last month.

Like all Cannes clambakes, it was a bit of a madhouse. *Conan* and *Phantom of the Paradise* producer Ed Pressman was there somewhere, yet I never found him. Some Brazilian group were feasting around on maracas and such like instruments, making it damnable difficult to hear what Richard Rubenstein was saying about a project called *Mayday* as his little daughter showed us he has a dancer in the family. The Brazilian touch was there because Irv Shapiro, as well as launching in his time the careers of people like Kubrick, Romero, Sidney J. Furie, Sam Raimi (and, of course, Rubenstein used to work for him) is also very much into the Brazil film scene these days. And no wonder. They make strong movies as well as coffee. So there was also a heap of Brazil's top stars and directors around the beach, not that I could tell one from the other - even after seeing their movies. Besides with his Comic contingent around, who had time to congratulate Walter Hugo Khouri on *Love Strange Love* or, more so, Roberto Farias on *Forward Brazil*, a Brazilian *Missing* which cost Farias his job as boss of the

government film agency.

Now, it was time for a notebook rather than pen in order to get up to date with the genre guy's news...

## ONE STEP FORWARD

Paul Bartel had the shock news. The *One Step Beyond* movie is off at Universal! Which hardly pleases Paul as he has been busy on the script. Apparently, Steven Spielberg has let it be known that he's none too keen on another movie coming out based on an old tele-series like his *Twilight Zone*. The fact that there would be a year's difference in release time doesn't enter into it (unless he's planning *Twilight Zone II*). But at Universal, whatever Steven wants, Steven gets.

However, Walter Hill's notion of an anthology trip is not altogether dead. "We're going to do *Tales From The Crypt*, instead," said Bartel. "Yeah, we've got all the rights and everything. As with *One Step Beyond*, I'll be directing one story. Walter Hill is doing another. In fact, he wants to start right after finishing *Streets of Fire*."

And is it, I asked, still Richard (Psycho II) Franklin for the third? "No, we've got David Giler interested in doing another of the tales," added Paul. "Walter is also talking to Ridley Scott and Martin Scorsese. Marty's very keen but it all depends on how the schedule fits in with his *Last Temptation of Jesus Christ* film." Some line-up!

## BARTEL'S NEXT

Paul Bartel also has a feature lined up. When the anthologies are over, he'll be getting into *Not For Publication* with Britain's *Xtro* producer, Mark Forster. A crazy comedy, I'm told. So what else is new from Bartel? "But much more mainstream than *Eating Raoul*," in Forster's opinion. I don't believe it. There's nothing mainstream about Paul.

## SAM'S SECOND

So, I said to Sam Raimi at the party, what is your next film - *Relentless*, as you told me here a year ago, or *The XYZ Murders*, as you've been recently proclaiming? Or are they, indeed, the one and the same script? "You got it," said Sam.

"I know I have," I said. "I'm the only member of the *Starburst* team who can spell your name right."

"It's the same script I had here in my briefcase when I met you last year. And he - howya been doing?" Fine, I said. How's the script doing?

"It's all polished and ready to go - in September. It's a crime thriller and a love story combined. About an average, law-abiding guy who decides to commit the perfect murder. Bruce Campbell will star again. And I'd really like Nastassia Kinski for the female lead, but I am too shy to give her a call."

Why the title switch anyway? "Well," said Sam, "I like *Relentless*," he said. "And yes, you're right, the film will be, ya know...relentless, all right; but Irvin Shapiro prefers *The XYZ Murders* and you can't really argue with Mr. Shapiro, can you?"

Probably not. In sold *Evil Dead* quite brilliantly at Cannes last year - as British video fans will know from the best-selling Palace Video unit. The film, itself, only recently

opened in New York where on the \$380 mini-marvel pulled in more than a million big ones in two weeks. All of which explained the smile on the faces of Messrs Raimi and Tapert.

Sam, by the way, is looking just a mite older (a mere day or two) than last year. He doesn't call me Sir, anymore, either. Good!

his tones. He has, after all, been toiling on this venture for close on three years. "It was painful," he nodded, "but I think in the long run it was a good thing. The longer you wait, the better your result. Look at *War Games* and *First Blood*."

In the interim, as mentioned last month, the script has changed and quite drastically

the Navy shipyards at Norfolk, Virginia, and then, thirty seconds later, reappeared back in Philly. Some of the crew died, the others went mad. Some had their molecular structures scrambled and others were described by Curtis as being walking electromagnetic timebombs.

Now, the script is still based in part on Charles Berlitz' book (the facts of which are much disputed by the U.S. Navy, of course), but concentrates on the two crew members who never returned... who, just, well, simply disappeared. In the new script, they reappear in 1984...

Then, Doug Curtis was banking on Joe Dante directing a Bill Lancaster script. Now, Joe is otherwise engaged in Spielberg country and as Harley Kokias is committed elsewhere, it's Jonathan Kaplan in the director's hotseat. Taking charge of the effects is Max W. Anderson, fresh from MGM's *Ice Pirates* of adventure...not to mention *Star Wars*, *Altered States*, *Tron* and *Cat People*, according to his hype.

"We never wanted the film to be overwhelmed by the special effects," added Curtis. "It's a story that people can get excited about on a special effects level and still care about the players. It's not played for laughs either, but we don't avoid the laughs." These will include *Sleeper*-style staves from the 1943 sailors when they're catapulted into 1984 and are shocked by the shop prices, kids playing video games and the sight of an 80-year-old Fred Astaire being interviewed on the tube.

Michael Janover has the final scripting credit - based, as they say, on a story by himself, John Carpenter and our Harley.

## TITLE CLASH

As if poor Doug Curtis hasn't had enough problems with *Philadelphia Experiment* movie since 1981, now he's set to shoot along comes a film-maker, name of Khaled Bazella, announcing a \$12m epic called...*The Philadelphia Incident*. What's more, it's also about a U.S. warship. But a different war... This is the U.S.S. *Philadelphia*, a frigate captured by North African forces in the Mediterranean in the aftermath of the American War of Independence.

The sound you're hearing is Doug Curtis rushing off to the title registration board with his complaint... To be honest, I don't think he should bother. He has a helluva good yarn, but a less than inspiring title.

## THEME CLASH

And wouldn't you know it - there's more electromagnetic coming down in an American sf. (for science fact) thriller called *The Chaos Factor*. (Add a 'y' to the last word of that title and it could be the *Starburst* Story). Villain of this piece is Russia's Electro Magnetic Pulse bomb, the EMP, cause of Reagan's *Star Wars* speech. The EMP does not have what the Pentagon calls "people killing capability," it just ruins your microchips. If dropped on America, it could wipe out electronic communication-systems for 2,000 miles. And that doesn't just mean no *Dalles*. It means destroying what's left of the NORAD defence communications after *War Games* has finished with it, all the electronics in airborne jetliners and the AWACS surveillance planes.



Above: The poster for *The Killing of Satan* starring Ramon Revilla. Left: The promotional art for the film, *Warrior of the Lost World*, starring Robert Ginty, Persis (Star Trek) Khambatta and the versatile Donal Pleasance.

## PHILLY READY

Producer Doug Curtis confirmed that *The Philadelphia Experiment*, first announced in these pages after Cannes '82, will finally start shooting on August 1, as one of the first projects of the "new" New World Pictures combine, since Roger Corman sold his company. John Carpenter remains the film's executive producer. "We have the money (\$3m) to do it properly and a director and special effects director who can bring it off," Doug told me with a certain relief quite evident in

(thanks to Harley) from when Doug Curtis first started reviving the project up at the now sold Avco-Embassy combine in 1981. Different, too, in fact, from the outline he ran over for me just one year back.

Then, it was a script based on the incredible but allegedly true account of the U.S. Navy radar-invisibility experiments on the U.S.S. *Eldridge* and its crew of twenty. The freighter-escort ship was subjected to a powerful electromagnetic field in 1943 and disappeared not just from radar scopes but from the sea itself, at Philadelphia, reappeared at



# THINGS TO COME

Kenneth Ross, who wrote the scripts of other factual thrillers like *Day of the Jackal*, *The Odessa File* and *Black Sunday*, is basing his new suspense scenario on the novel called *The Svalbard Passage*. He's had free discussions on the EMP bomb with Pentagon sources who point out that America is now developing a weapon to foil the Russian device.

They need it. According to Ross, America is powerless at the moment against the EMP. If the Russians dropped it, all retaliation – following the chaos of his title – would have to come from NATO headquarters in Europe and the SAC bases in Britain. The question is, of course, if America's communications are destroyed, how would Uncle Sam, never mind Mr Reagan, telephone NATO. ?

in Tahiti on his *Bounty* film long before the festival closed (meekly). As his replacement, I tackled MGM's bossman, Freddie Fields. A man of big movies and small words. To wit...

"Yes, we have been discussing 2010 with several directors, Peter Weir being one of them. No scriptwriter has been signed yet and the film would not be ready to go until (pause) 1983." That pause was so long, though, I felt sure he really meant '85.

"That's as much as I know about it!" Peter Weir told me. "I've read the book. I loved it and saw a lot of difficulties in that area. Apparently, Stanley Kubrick has a lot of ideas about it..." Now, it's a Weir pause... "It's intriguing and it's enormously difficult to contemplate – to step into a sequel to Stanley Kubrick's own film, I mean, I'm way back before the novel, I'm way back with Stanley

Kubrick's film... I honestly haven't thought too much about it because I don't even know if I should consider it. I'd like to talk to Mr Kubrick and say... firstly, be quite clear on exactly the fact that he doesn't want to direct it. That does seem natural... but I don't know what he thinks about it."

Now there's a surprise! Peter Weir talking about "Mr Kubrick", wanting to talk to him, find out why Stan The Men doesn't want to direct the sequel... And there I was under the impression they were old mates by now, that Kubrick loved Weir's film and had, in fact, suggested him for the 2010 film, presumably after discussing it with him.

"No, I've never met him," explained Weir. What... ?

"We've just corresponded briefly. I have from time to time sent him advice that he's

requested about distribution and exhibition situations in Australia. What is this particular theatre like? What about this release date? But he has done a lot of favours for me and he's looked at all my films. But then, he looks at all films and has helped and been interested in a number of film-makers, so mine is not a unique position."

Weir smiles and referred to his most memorable character in *(The Year of) Living Dangerously*. "He is, as Billy Kwan says, 'the un-met friend'."

Not for much longer, I'm sure. As for the un-met comment, though, I now have the feeling that when 2010 does start shooting, Peter Weir won't be directing. And given his main remarks, I wonder which director out there is brave enough to tackle what is – and should be – a Kubrick sequel.

## ROMERO PLANS

Richard Rubinstein was running through his and George Romero's quite colossal list of close to a dozen movies for the next few years when I had to call a halt and make a date to talk to him in more depth and someplace more quiet than an American/Brazilian fiesta. "Like the Carlton Terrace," he suggested with a laugh. Well, this year, with the new Palais opened for wholly disorganised business at the other end of the Croisette, the Carlton Terrace was much quieter than usual. And that's where we met up for our bi-annual interview sessions, due in a later edition. This will outline all the Laurel Entertainment roster of goodies to come.

To whet your appetite for that, let me just say the line-up includes, natch, *Day of the Dead*, *The Stand* and *Crepuscule II*, as already mentioned here many (many) times. Plus the *Hero of the Century*, created by George and Marvel Comics. New items include *The Sisterhood*, *Mayday*, *Calling The Shots* and George Romero's definitive version of... wait for it... *Frankenstein!*

George won't be directing all of these features. In fact, he and Rubinstein are shopping around for new directors for some of their projects. DON'T write to me – write to them! Here on the Laurel plans – and the barney over Tobe Hooper's *Return of the Living Dead* in a month or so. Hooper's producer will love that...

## QUICK TOWN FOX

...because Tom Fox was also in town and just loving the Romero row he's started. "This kind of baloney is just great for my pictures," he said. He's damned sure he has the necessary rights, is far from fretful about Rubinstein's protest to the title registration people who seems to have resulted in Fox's title being yanked away from him. For now, he's calling the film *Tobe Hooper's Return of the Living Dead*. The battle continues...

## 2010: LATEST

Okay, the big news, or the big confirmation, at least, promised last month I'd get the nitty-gritty on the 2001 sequel from either director Peter Weir or possible star Mel Gibson. As it happened, the nearest I got to Mel was watching him on a TV monitor during his and Weir's *Year of Living Dangerously* Press confab. he just wasn't in town long enough to get together with, and was off



## BRITAIN BACKS WES

"Just when Bobby thought it was safe to go back into the desert..." is the hype line. And no, nothing to do with Patrick Duffy's jazz 'n' murder movie, *Yemping*. This is the other Bobby. Son of retired cop Big Bob Carter. Remember the Carters of some six years ago – no, not those Carters. Well, that Bobby's coming back. Haunted, it says here, by the horrors of the desert where the family of Jupiter held sway. "Got it now? Jupiter. Mers. Pluto..."

Right Wes Craven, finding it impossible to escape his image as "the hardcore maniac of violence", has rolled with the punches and begun making *The Hills Have Eyes Part 2*. Code-named, or sub-titled, *The Night of Jupiter*.

So not only young Bobby is back. Ruby, too. And somehow old Jupiter, himself, actually surviving Bobby's 1977 booby-trap. Even Pluto is alive and mad and living in a cupboard in a dilapidated spa hotel in the desert. But wasn't Pluto's throat torn out by Bobby's dog...? Yes, well, you know about sequels. The dog, *The Beast*, is back, too. But not it's mate, *Beauty*. If you saw the original *Hills*, you'll recall "was another beast killed Beauty."

British luck is heavily involved in the remake... I'm sorry, the sequel: It's a co-production by Craven's original producers, Barry Cahn and Peter Locke in America, plus Britain's New Reel company which released the original here in 1978, and the London and Stockholm-based video firm of VTC (Video Tape Centre). The first *Hills*, as if you didn't know, is an enormous best-seller

on cassette.

For some ferns, of course, *Hills* is a full-blown classic. Certainly, it's picked up prizes at both the (natural) Stiges and (more surprisingly) London film festivals. It was also, by the way, the feature debut of a certain Desi Wells, who stuck with our genre ever since with *The Howling*, playing Elliott's Ma in *E.T.* and later this year we see her tackling *Cujo*. (She must have a thing about beasts).

For others, however, *The Hills Have Eyes* was easily written off as being only marginally less of a bloodbath than Craven's terrifying debut, *The Last House on the Left* (1972), his re-working of Bergman's *Virgin Spring* rape-drama (1960), for all its socio-psychic pretensions about mirroring opposite sides of the human personality in the two family broods, not to mention their opposing class structures, *Hills* was, to be frank, cruncely tested, badly lit and acted. "Simultaneously risible and nauseating," suggested London critic Tim Puleigne. (Now I suppose I'll start getting all the mail usually addressed to J. Broenon).

As before, Wes Craven has penned the scenario for his new desert trek and, I gather, he'll be casting the film with as many of the (literal) survivors of the first movie as possible. Mainly, James Whitworth as Jupiter and Michael Berryman as the mutant Pluto, maybe Janus Blythe's Ruby and Robert Houston's Bobby, too. There was, however, no casting confirmation possible at Cannes, where Adrienne Falcet of New Reel and Guy Collins of VTC were busy showing their promo reel (best cuts from the first movie) to potential buyers.

## CRAVEN IMAGE

Whether the new *Hills* is good news for Wes Craven, I can't say, either; he was not in Cannes. Certainly, the last time he spoke to us – to Alan Jones in *Starburst 44* – he was aiming to leave or at least rest from his genre image. He wanted to be known as a film director, not as a horror director. (Shades of Chris Lee...) To that end he was then planning a possible Disney outing (really!) called *Circus Gang*, though the likelihood of Disney giving Craven must be about as remote as the "Mickey Mouseketeers signing up either Tobe Hooper or Gerard DeMaio. Which was probably why Craven was also preparing a more typical back-up number, *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Neither movie came off.

Commenting on the violence of both his *Last House* and *Hills* films, Wes told Alan: "I don't want to ever feel uncomfortable again about making a statement about human depravity and then engaging in it to make the point." Yes, well, we all say things we regret... He now has a wife to support (he married actress-model Millicent Meyer last year) and he's doubtless going for the money with *Hills 2*.

## HILLS ACTION

If Bobby is six years older (and he won't get any older!), his new brood are pals headed for the national motorcross races at Bakersfield. All young, enough to be survivors of Cunningham's Camp Crystal Lake. One teen couple nephew between the sheets as often as possible "despite the tension closing around them", another girl takes showers at the most inopportune times and so on. The only real survivor of the mayhem when it comes down – exactly as before with Jupiter and Pluto back from the grave they should be in – is a "next-door knockout" girl called Cass. And she, if you can believe it, is blind.

One should not, of course, base even a temporary opinion on an unseen/unmade film from a written synopsis of the script. Or in this case, I hope I don't have to. The synopsis reads very, very, badly. Explosive, but crass. Inconsistent, too. It is Ruby, the very girl who saved Bobby's ass last time around, who now sends him and his happy band of moto-crossers to a desert short-cut, where soon enough "cut" is right and as in 1977, "The sands ran with blood and the hills had eyes..."



# BUSTER CRABBE

## 1908-1983



### BIGGEST FANTASY HERO OF EMALL

Buster Crabbe, one of the true heroes of the early, fumbling days of the fantasy film genre, sadly died of a heart attack, aged 75, at his home in Spielberg's home town of Scottsdale, Arizona, on April 23. Buster was the

seventh screen Tarzan, but the first (and only!) Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers and Kasper. The Lion Man and Thunda, King of the Congo, Capt Gallant, Red Barry... and he also got to play Billy The Kid for a spell. He played 'em all, Buster did. And with effortless panache... once drama coaches curbed his naturally high-pitched voice into more genuine macho tones.

Despite his age, he was in the best of health and, according to his wife, was "enthusiastically" making plans for a trip to a Nashville charity show, five minutes before his fatal cardiac arrest.

Known to family and friends as Larry, Buster was born Clarence L. (for London) Crabbe, on February 17, 1908, in Oakland, California. But he was raised on a pineapple plantation in Hawaii - and that's the where, how and why of it as far as his swimming brilliance is concerned. (He was a boxer, too, at the Hawaii University).

He won the gold medal in the 400m free-style event at the 1932 Olympics, beating the records previously held by a fellow by the name of Weismuller in the '24 and '28 Games. The two swimming acts were great buddies and laughed at their much hyped rivalry, once they both hit it big in Hollywood.

For Buster Crabbe, getting to Film City was not difficult. Those '32 Games were the last staged in Los Angeles, itself, and once the Olympiad was over, studio talent scouts ran around the young athletes looking for new screen heroes, as they will be again next year in L.A. At Paramount, alone, some forty Olympians were tested... Buster was the only one

signed up.

He'd been considered for movies before that. Peter John Weismuller, in fact, had beaten Buster to the Tarzan role in the 1931 auditions for *Tarzan The Ape Man*. Johnny was two inches taller and ten pounds heavier than Buster; Crabbe had the bigger chest and wider shoulders. Sports experts still rate Weismuller as the better swimmer of the two. With reason. In all, Johnny held a staggering 174 individual swimming records. Buster didn't do badly, though. He held five world records and more than fifty world and national swimming championships.

The Paramount contract - \$100 a week for seven years, but with a one year option if they wanted to junk him - put paid to his plans to become a lawyer. Paramount wasted him. He got to play Kasper, The Lion Man in *King of the Jungle* (1933) and then donned the ape-man's lion-cloth (or in Crabbe's case, a natty pair of leopard skin panties), for the movie and serial version of *Tarzan The Fearless*, such as *Tarzan The Invincible*, in 1933. That's the one with Jacqueline Wells, later called Julie Bishop, as Mary Not Jane. It was not, by any standards, the best of the Tarzan movies.

Universal made Crabbe a star. As *Flash Gordon* in the 1936 serial, followed by a bunch of Westerns and other adventure movies, until *Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars*, another serial (also released as a movie, *Mars Attacks The World*) in 1938. He became *Buck Rogers* the following year and had another serial outing as *Flash in Flash Gordon Conquers The Universe* in 1940.

In all, Buster Crabbe made about 180

films, serials and TV shows, from his *Billy The Kid* western with Al 'Fuzzy' St John as his inevitable sidekick in the '40s, to another jungle hero, *Thunda in King of the Congo* (1952), and his long-running TV series, *Captain Gallant of the French Foreign Legion*, featuring his son, Cullen "Cuffy" Crabbe. And he still ruled the swimming roost, succeeding Weismuller in the Billy Rose Aquacade show at the 1940 New York World's Fair, and later touring his own Buster Crabbe Aquacade for five years. Indeed he was still spreading the good (healed) word about swimming up to his death. He was an executive director of New Jersey's Cascade Industries which builds the Buster Crabbe pools.

The benefit show he was planning to visit in Nashville when he died was in aid of arthritis victims and it was to promote a book about exercises for the arthritis that Buster last visited in Britain in 1981, when he talked to John Baxter for *Starburst*. His comment about *Flash Gordon*? "I thought this was absolutely mad. You know, three crazy people, after all, in a rocket ship, dashing off to Mongo and running into all sorts of things. I just didn't think it had a chance. The thing I really hated was having to go to Perc Westmore's place to get my hair bleached. In those days, everyone wore hats, and if I was in an elevator and a girl got in, we'd always take off our hats. After my hair was bleached I never did it anymore; it stayed jammed right down. I used to get whistles from guys when they saw that bleached hair. If I'd have caught some of those guys, I'd have killed them!"

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CLOCKWORK ORANGE (WARNER BROS.) GERMAN IMP.

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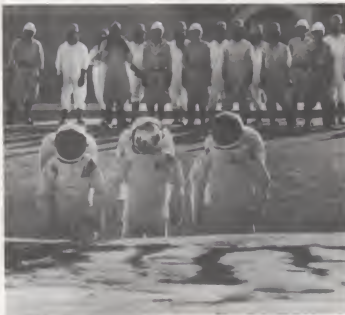
# STARBURST FANTASY AWARDS '82

**A**t long last, after the monumental task of counting literally "a lot" of votes, we bring you the results of the Starburst Fantasy Awards for 1982 (better late than never, eh?).

## TV AWARDS

**Best TV Show** Doctor Who.  
**Best Actor** Peter Davison for the title role in Doctor Who.  
**Best Actress** Janet Fielding for Tegan Jovanka in Doctor Who.  
**Best Director** Peter Grimwade for the Doctor Who story Earthshock.  
**Best Script** Eric Saward for the Doctor Who story Earthshock.  
**Best Special Effects** The BBC Radiophonics Workshop for Doctor Who.

As you can see there was no real contest for the tv fantasy awards with Doctor Who, the longest running science fiction series of all time (and space), easily winning every section. There was a general lack of new fantasy material being screened last year, the only other programme that took more than just a few votes for Best Show and Best Script was the inferior sequel to *The Flipside of Dominick Hide* by Alan Gibson, *Another Flip for Dominick*. The name of its star, Peter Firth, also cropped up a number of times for Best Actor. The only actress that came close in popularity to Janet Fielding was of course the good Doctor's other leggy companion, Sarah Sutton as Nyssa.



## FILM AWARDS

**Best Film** E.T.  
**Best Actor** Harrison Ford for Rick Deckard in *Blade Runner*.  
**Best Actress** Sean Young as Rachel in *Blade Runner*.  
**Best Director** Steven Spielberg for E.T.  
**Best Script** Melissa Matheson for E.T.  
**Best Special Effects** Rob Bottin for *The Thing*.

Throughout most of the film categories there was a fierce battle between the two biggies of the year, E.T. and *Blade Runner*, with Spielberg's mega-hit, the more commercial of the two, just scraping ahead for the title of Best Film. Harrison Ford walked it for Best Actor, followed by Rutger Hauer for his striking performance as replicant Roy Batty in the same film. A *Blade Runner* star again for Best Actress,

but Dee Wallace for E.T. and Jobeth Williams for *Polygeist* also clocked up a lot of votes. An overwhelming victory for Spielberg as Best Director, though Ridley Scott was deservedly recognised for *Blade Runner*. A closely run finish in the Special Effects category with *The Thing* beating Doug Trumbull's work on *Blade Runner* by one vote! *Polygeist* and *Tron* were close contenders.

## OTHER AWARDS

**Best Fantasy Book** *Life, The Universe and Everything* by Douglas Adams.  
**Outstanding Achievement** by an Individual Steven Spielberg.

The third of Adams' Hitchhikers books took the greatest percentage of votes for the literature on the market for 1982, but "Don't panic"; other popular choices included Stephen King's terror tale, *Cujo*, the long awaited sequel to 2001, 2010 by Arthur C. Clarke, and even the E.T. novelisation.

E.T. was the reason most readers nominated Spielberg for Outstanding Achievement by an individual, and Carlo Rambaldi also got quite a few mentions for designing the cute little creature of the title. Other popular nominees included Rob Bottin for his incredible effects work on *The Thing* (see Best Special Effects), Steven Lisberger for his direction of *Tron*, and unsurprisingly Ridley Scott for *Blade Runner*.

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**CARRIE FISHER**



**JOHN BADHAM**



**STEPHEN KING**





# CARRIE FISHER

## A Starburst Interview by Ed Team

**The completion of Return of the Jedi marked the end of the road for the major character of the first trilogy of Star Wars pictures. Starburst caught up with Carrie Fisher, Princess Leia that was, at the end of a series of interviews in London, where's she's been taking a few days off before returning to America for a minor operation on her throat. In this interview, she talks about Shampoo, her involvement in The Blues Brothers and how John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd were very nearly monsters in Jabba's throne room**

**Starburst:** Before getting on to the Star Wars films, we'd like to talk briefly about *The Blues Brothers*. How did you get involved in that? **Carrie Fisher:** I was good friends with Danny (Ackroyd) and John (Belushi) and I knew (John) Landis from somewhere. They rang me up while I was doing *Empire* in London – most of the jobs I've got have been through people I know – they would call and leave strange messages to confuse the cleaning woman here: "Lewis has just got out of prison. . . so that I could never look her in the face again. Was it as much fun as it looked?"

I'd already done *Saturday Night Live* with them and that was fun to do. *The Blues Brothers* was fun, except that you were alerted instantly as you arrived on the set. . . "If you see John doing anything, report up to the office." They finally got John a bodyguard to protect him from himself. We did mostly night shooting in Chicago, dangerous parts of Chicago. I was on it forever. . . they just kept filming my parts every two weeks. It took four months to film and I was on it the whole time. I think they made a mistake by putting me on a weekly salary. I can't even remember a lot of it, except being dropped in mud and having to convince Danny that all the guns I used were real guns that the F.B.I. use but hadn't been put on the market for public use. . . particularly the first one with the rockets. And putting those nails

on! That hurt more than anything, that was the worst stunt I've ever had to do. I wear all Sears Roebuck clothing and have a little plastic bag with my comb in.

It was fun. Everyone doing "improvs", everyone going over to Second City, going on stage – that's where they all came from – going to Blues bars. John (Belushi) always thought I was much more famous than him, so he identified with me. "You know how it is for us!" I'd say, "But, John, you can't even walk down the street!" There was nobody who looked like John. He once wanted to go to Disneyland and I said, "Well, you might as well go to the Matterhorn." I mean, people would climb all over him.



**Isn't there a story about John Belushi wanting to appear in a Star Wars movie?**

Absolutely – the last time I saw him, he grabbed me at this party, before I came over here to do *Jedi*. He said, "Tell Lucas that Danny and I want to be monsters. We'll fly over, we'll pay any money, we just want to be monsters." And he was dead serious. He threw me in the bathroom and sat against the door – that's about as serious as you can get. I thought it would have been a good idea, except that is would have detracted from the movie – unless you completely covered him in fur. Since he got me into *The Blues Brothers*, I think it was a debt, but I didn't ask. I just said, "Alright!"

**Shall we talk about Star Wars now?**

Nah!

**Okay then. . . Aside from the fact that you have a lot of family in show business why did you want to get into movies?**

Well, I loved old movies. I was brought up on those and my mother (Debbie Reynolds) was in a lot of old films. But I wanted to be a singer, until I got *Shampoo*. A friend of mine suggested me and I met with Hal Ashby and Warren Beatty and they said, "Right, you've got the part." I didn't even know what I was going to do, but I did it in a week and then I came over here and went to The Central School of Speech and Drama.

**It sounds almost accidental. . .**  
It was very fast. I wasn't sure what I'd done, really. . .

**What style of singer did you see yourself as?**  
I was a singer, singing professionally with my mother. Last time I sang here was probably at the Palladium. I was listening to Linda Ronstadt, Joni Mitchell and Jackson Brown, whatever was of that time, and singing Garland numbers, which I did well.

**Have you done any singing since?**  
We did a *Star Wars* special in which I sang, and sounded like Julie Andrews, but I never saw it. Then I did a thing on *Saturday Night Live* called "Beach Blanket Bimbo from Outer Space", which was great. There was this Twist number in it with the backing singers going "Obi Wan Kenobi, Obi Wan Kenobi" and I did the Twist with John Belushi. Danny Ackroyd played Vincent Price. I just sort of arrive on the beach as Princess Leia. I'm wearing this breakout outfit with a Sixties gold lamé bikini. I sang like Lesley Gore in that.

**The character you play in *Jedi* is so different to the previous versions of the Princess. Was that a conscious decision?**

Not my decision. They took a lot of the bite out of her bitchiness. You can look at that in a positive way. It's nice that she's not barking at everyone, even though she's been introduced as a character who's a soldier, who really has no friends, but then meets up with people of her own age. In *Empire* it was nice because she is a little more confused. She's fighting with Han Solo because she's not used to interacting on a human level with people. I like those sorts of relationship. They did them in the old films. Lawrence Kasdan writes in that traditional Hollywood movie style.

Yes, he does. Han and Leia are two people who are absolutely opposite, like Bogart and Hepburn in *The African Queen*. Leia is from a very high class and Han is a smuggler, a rogue. The best thing about *Empire* was that Kershner, Harrison and I would sit around and write the whole thing out.

**That's quite a magic moment in *Empire*, when Han kisses Leia for the first time.**

That scene was great, I really love it. We wrote a lot of the dialogue in that scene. That's the first time anyone called me "Leia", really. But coming from Han Solo, it sounds absurd at that point, as we'd been fighting and he'd been calling me "Your Holiness". So we'd bring a lot of our own humour into that. It was easier for me to write lines for Harrison, then his dialogue would reflect what my character was like, although she was coming apart at that point. In *Jedi*, she charged to become a more accessible person.

When I think of myself as Leia, I don't know ▶



if her character is that way largely because of my voice or style. It's very kind of male instead of being submissive and supportive. I had a lot of trouble as the bounty hunter in *Jedi*. To me, it just looks like me, but in a whole other way. Yes, I had you spotted almost immediately. Why didn't they cheat and put another actor in the costume?

Well, I guess people already know I'm that small. They didn't put any air holes in the mask and I felt so ill. But you're right, it does look like me—I just walk like a girl. The first time I did it, I had to walk the whole of the way across the stage and I looked like a girl. So the next time I did it I had this over-confident walk. When I got to the end of the scene, I heard someone say, "Looks like a bloody poof!" I don't know why they didn't cheat or put me on an apple box or something. I do look like a child.

I don't think that's the problem. The gestures were just so very feminine.

But I always think I'm not. George (Lucas) told me to stand like John Wayne. If you're tall and you stand like that, it's fine. But if you're my size, it looks like you're waiting to be asked to dance. But then, John Wayne walked like a woman. He swayed his hips—it was called "a swagger". Richard Gere walks like a stud and that's different. He walks like "you want what I've got!" but that I couldn't do real well. Try as you might, you can't hide the fact that I'm 5ft 1½ ins and very thin. Compared to everyone else I look tiny. Then they put me against Chewiel

You mentioned it was hard to breathe in the mask...

Yeah, the whole crew was sick with the flu and they had this incense burning on the stage. I had no holes in the mask to breathe through so by the end of the mastertake I'd lost my breath and they had to take me off the stage. They let you do four takes when they can see you're gradually deteriorating to nothing—and you don't want to complain. I was really ill. I'd got bronchitis in about ten minutes—you can do it if you work hard enough! Everyone else was ill too. I came in and worked the next day but they called in the doctor, the same doctor we've had for every film. "Hello again. Well, what's wrong this time? Ah, you've got a bit of congestion. I'd send you home if you weren't a Star War"—it had become a noun—"but as you're a Star War I'll just put you on double doses of Ceflax." I was just whacked! Those things make me real down.

In the scene when Leia is chained to Jabba, I thought she should have acted more mortified!

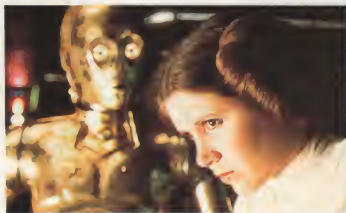
Absolutely! I was crazed that day! I came in and looked at the script pages and George was off ill. I said, "Excuse me, but you guys take my clothes off then chain me up. After two films where I'm not afraid of Vader or Tarkin, why should I be afraid of a slug?" In the scene where I'm tied to Jabba, Han comes in and says, "Where's Leia?" I say, "I'm here!" and he asked how I am. I answer, "I've been better!" I think we wrote that, Richard

(Marquand), Dave Tomblin and I. Then as the others are led off, leaving me sitting there, Leia doesn't say, "Well, good luck in the digestion process!" I said it in rehearsal. At that point I was amazed that Leia would just sit there, in those skimpy clothes, saying practically nothing. The only way they could justify that, I told them, was if Jabba pulled my chains real tight so I couldn't speak. I couldn't see my character not talking.

In fact, the Princess seemed less angry all the way through *Jedi*.

Well, if you figure that her anger in *Empire* was funnelled into Han. In *Star Wars*, she's just angry, which I think is a function of youth. She was probably brought up in an environment where she's constantly under attack, so she just became this defensive, sardonic, tough little girl. Then, in the second film, she's still tough, but softens up and somehow the toughness is channelled towards Han, so that when he goes away it's her first willingness to show emotion for somebody else. So to form attachments under these conditions is really an exercise. She's just a "steeled" person. She ages, she matures and she has relationships, which she didn't have in the first film, so she becomes attached to Han and just becomes more female, I think. I like that because she's still strong and capable, yet feminine.

It seems as though, when men write women characters and they're supposed to be strong, they have to be mean or angry, and they're strong under attack. In *Empire*, she is the leader of the Rebellion, but she doesn't seem



1. Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia Organa with unique hairstyle, observed by C3PO (Anthony Daniels) in *Star Wars*. 2. Leia and Han get down to the mushy stuff in *Return of the Jedi*. 3. A portrait of Carrie Fisher. 4. The Princess defends herself against the onslaught from the *Empire* while Han fumbles with the door controls.



to have as much ego as in the first film. In some ways, she has matured enough to be able to think maybe somebody else has an idea. In the first film it's, "I'll do it!" out of panic.

**So how does the more feminine Princess manage to strangle a huge creature like Jabba the Hutt?**

Her power. . . (whispering) "She's got the Force!" The idea, as written in the script, was Jabba's watching the action and the Princess sort of waits for her moment. She jumps up and hits a device, plunging the ship into darkness. Now Jabba can't move too well. When the Princess turns out the lights it sort of creates havoc among the crew. I took the chain, jumped over him and sawed his throat off. I just had to have someone hold the other end of the chain. And they didn't think I could do it!

**How far into the movie did you get before you knew that the Princess was a Skywalker?**

They gave us a script about a month before, that's when I knew.

**I thought there was a pretty broad hint in Empire. . .**

"Leia, hear me!" But that could have been that Luke could make anyone hear him.

**Well, I'm pretty well convinced that every plot detail, every step of the way, is meticulously planned. . .**

Probably right.

**And Luke never actually kisses the Princess.**

The princess kisses him, to make Han jealous. . . but not as well as I could have. No, we don't actually kiss.



**Do you think there will be more Star Wars movies?**

George (Lucas) is real tired. His wife's just had another baby. I just saw him, he's lost 15lbs, he's executive producing *Indiana Jones* (and the *Temple of Doom*), the prequel to *Raiders*, and he doesn't have time for life. He oversees everything, every single move. He oversees all the miniatures, the editing, the mixing, the looping, everything. . . I don't think he'd look good in a slave girl outfit. . . and his wife is also an editor, so they hardly ever see each other. If he does another one, I don't know if he'd do it for some time and then, I think, he'd do 1, 2 and 3, which would be young Kenobi, young Vader in a pub in space.

**What do you plan next?**

To have my hair done!

**Seriously!**

I haven't had a vacation. I've just finished doing a play in New York. In doing the play, I've harmed my voice. I have to go back to have a minor operation on my voice. And it's difficult to find things you like to do, that are as much fun to be part of as these films are. You have to be careful, I think, because a film is a lot of time out of your life and to spend five months having a bad time which I did on one job, is a mistake you don't want to make. So when I'm not filming I take lessons and I simply do work between times. I'll do *Laverne and Shirley* or *Saturday Night Live*, so there's always something. So long as I'm acting. But I would like to do another film, so I have to go back to the States and find one I'd like to do.



Top: As Jabba the Hutt's new pet, Princess Leia is kept in chains. Above: The Princess is repelled by the menacing Jabba. Far right: A portrait of Princess Leia in the forest of Endor. Right: Leia, alert and ready for action, in *Return of the Jedi*.





# A Starburst In STEPHEN

BY ADAM PIRANI

Stephen King is one of the world's most successful novelists. An amazing achievement when one considers that none of King's books contain fast cars, international intrigue or sexy women. He is a teller of tales of ordinary folk confronted by extraordinary supernatural phenomena. As became appa-

*Starburst: It seems like a busy time for you. We're due to be getting several films from your books, shortly.*

**Stephen King:** There's a lot of stuff going on. *Cujo* is finished. Lewis Teague directed it, Dee Wallace is in it, I've seen a promotional reel. It's a 14 minute reel that actually makes a sort of condensed story that is very frightening. I think they've taken some of the plot elements and put them out of order in order to create a movie, but it's very frightening.

*The Dead Zone* is done, at least in a rough version, I'm going to see a rough cut of that the day after tomorrow in New York. David Cronenberg directed it, Christopher Walken plays Johnny Smith, Martin Sheen plays Stillson and Colleen Dewhurst plays the crazy cop's mother.

*Do you lay down any artistic guidelines for filmmakers adapting your work into movies?*

I don't care. The most important factor for me is that if they're going to go ahead and do something with it, they pay me. This is a little bit like sending one of your young children out to visit sailors, and what you say is, "Gee, I'm sorry you're going to be spoiled, but be sure to bring home the money." I'd like to see them do a good job, the same way that if your daughter's going to be spoiled by sailors you would prefer her not to come home with a disease, or torn up, or anything like that. I want them to do the best job possible.

But movies are very ephemeral. They don't last very long, even in a physical sense. I listened to somebody the other day tell me that the negatives of a lot of Hammer horror films are in terrible shape, and they're degenerating. A lot of the negatives were sent to the United States, to make prints, and they've been stored in places where they've gotten wet, where there's been mildew...and so a lot of those things, the ones made, let's say, from 1956 to

## ON HIS WORKING SCHEDULE

*I write every day, except when I'm on a trip like this, and believe me, I'm half-mad to write. I feel like a junkie on withdrawal. I sit down every day and write in the morning, from about 8 o'clock until about 10.30 - that's when I work on whatever has to be done, whatever is on the front burner. Sometimes I'll work on something else at night, just for fun. But I don't make myself do that - if it feels right, I'll do it, if it doesn't, I won't.*

# Interview with STEPHEN KING

AND ALAN MCKENZIE

rent during the interview, he draws heavily on his own experiences as a husband and a father while writing his novels. *Starburst* caught up with King at the tail end of a series of interviews he was giving to help promote his newest story, released in hardback, *Christine*.

1962, will soon cease to exist altogether. And nobody's been successful in raising any money to save them, or anything like that.

They're ephemeral in the sense that they come to the theatre—even in the case of *E.T.*, and *E.T.* played longer in the United States in its first run than any picture I have ever known of; that includes *Star Wars*, and *American Graffiti* and everything. Where I was, it opened in the summer and it was still playing there at Thanksgiving (November), it just went on and on and on. But even so, that's about half as long as a book like, say, *Firestarter*, was on the American best-seller lists—it had a longer run there [than *E.T.*]. So that's gone, and it comes back in re-issue, and it's gone, then maybe it shows up on pay-TV, then it's gone, then maybe on the TV on the late show or something like that, a while later, and then it really is gone.

*Sure, but fine movies nearly always re-surface.*

They do, that's true. The movies have been important to me, because, when *Carrie* came out in hardcover, the total sale of that book in the first edition hardcover was about 11,000 copies. And that's in the United States. In England that would be a very respectable sale, but in America it's not much. It did well in paperback, but it didn't get on the list. What happened is the De Palma film came out, and the De Palma film was great. Usually, a movie tie-in doesn't mean very much, if the movie stinks, because it doesn't go anywhere. But if the movie's great, a lot of times, it'll take off. That's really what made it happen for me, I think. To a large degree, in a lot of minds. *Salem's Lot* did OK on its own, so maybe I would have done it anyway, but I'm thinking it would have taken a lot longer.

*Cujo moves very quickly and is a very visually orientated novel, as though you were running a movie in your mind as you were writing it. Did you*



Far left: Stephen King, "impaled" on some London railings, on his recent visit to this country to promote his latest novel, *Christine*. Left: A portrait of King, looking serious. Above: In this scene from *Creepshow*, directed by George Romero, the two drowned lovers return to wreak terrible revenge on their murderer in the *Something to Tide You Over* segment. Right: The creature lives in *The Crate* segment of *Creepshow* (1982), written by Stephen King.

Photo by Steve O'Leary





## ON WRITERS BLOCK

*I think that people who are really faced with writer's block are people who are suffering from psychological constipation. I tried to describe impotence one time, saying that what impotence is, for a man anyway, when you say to yourself, "Sure would be funny if I was impotent with this girl, wouldn't it? Geez, that would be so embarrassing. I'm so glad I'm not going to be impotent...at least, I don't think I'm going to be impotent. Wouldn't it be awful if I was?" And the more you worry about it, the more it's likely to happen. And if a writer worries about writer's block...sooner or later, sure enough....*

*deliberately do that?*

Yeah, in a way I did. People are always asking me, do I write with movies in mind, but I didn't write with the movies in mind anymore than Jack Finney did, and Jack Finney had, I think, four novels in a row made into movies. It was simply that he had a visual sense, that is in terms of imagination, depth perception and clarity, the ability to offer texture...

I'd always wondered whether or not it would be possible to write a novel restricted to a very small space, and my first idea was whether or not it would be possible to write a 400 page novel that was entirely set in a stalled elevator. And then it sort of expanded to the idea of the automobile, and I couldn't keep it all in the automobile, I felt that I had to lead up to it. But I began to think of it as a low-budget novel (laughter). It was like a movie, it's more visual than any of the others, because the setting is so restricted. I think of it also in terms of macro-focus, like one of those close-ups where you can see every pore on a person's face. But that's really exciting.

*Do you draw a lot from your dreams?*

No, very rarely. There's a thing in *Salem's Lot* where Ben Mears, as a kid, goes into the Marsten House, and he sees a corpse — the ghost of a corpse, hanging from a beam... and the corpse opens its eyes. And that was a dream I had when I was a kid, that was a very vivid nightmare and I woke up screaming, waking up everybody in the house and the whole bit. And there are a couple of other cases where I've used dreams, but it's rarely. In fact, there's a book that's done, in first draft anyway, called it, and I got to a section where I really didn't know what to do. Usually I'm happy if I'm a little bit ahead in my own mind, if I know what's going to happen. If this is Wednesday and I know what's going to happen on Thursday, then I can sit down to the typewriter with perfect equanimity and feel that I can go ahead and write this, and then when Thursday comes we'll let Friday take care of itself, that's something I prefer. But nothing was coming, and I was running closer and closer to having used up all the back-stock, the thought-train. I had a situation where there was this little girl who was my heroine, who was down in this sort of jungly growth, hiding from this rather evil boy. And I had a dream, and in the dream I had this boy finding this old discarded refrigerator, and opening it up, and the thing was full of slugs, these sort of big leeches, and they flew out, and they began to stick all over his face and all over his body, and they literally sucked him dry, some of them were drinking so much blood they were exploding, just splattering everywhere, and this guy's running around, pulling them off...and I woke up, and your first reaction when you wake up from a really bad dream is — you don't know if it's real or if it's not real and I woke up going like this [clutching his skin to check for bugs] myself. And then that moment comes, it's really great, it's like when you come out of a horror movie or something, you say "I thought it was real, ha-ha-ha" — and you feel like you've been born again. So that's what I did to her, essentially, I simply used the dream, almost word-for-word or image-for-image. It worked very nicely. It was a way out.

*Have you ever tried to analyse just why it is that so many people buy your books?*

I don't know. I think that they must think that I'm really a fantastic person [laughter] I think [my work] is accessible. I think that there are rather large doorways into the work. This is not always something that makes critics terribly happy. Just on this most recent book, *Christine*, which is probably the most accessible of the lot, there have been several critics in the United States who've said things like "Anything that so many people read cannot be any

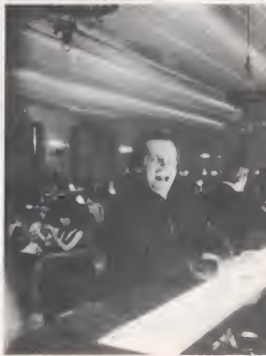
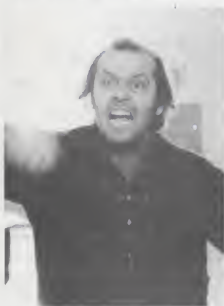
good, by definition, because it must appeal to a fairly low common denominator and therefore this must be fairly common stuff." In fact, *Time* magazine called me "the master of post-literate prose". The tone of the article wasn't even angry, it was just sort of mournful. You know, [in a despairing monotone]: "Rome has fallen, the barbarians are in the city, they're peeing in the fountains, this is it, this is the way the world ends, not with a bang...but with Stephen King."

I think [my work] is accessible, I think one of the things that's working here is that, balancing off the idea of horror, or the idea of monstrosity, there are characters that seem very normal, very nice. If these characters that I'd written existed in novels where there was not a horror format, they'd be a big yawn. You take Ben Mears, the guy in *Salem's Lot*. This is a writer who has none of the obsessional traits that we associate with writers; he doesn't stay up all night — he seems to worry about fairly normal things in his relationship with his girl, he seems as tentative as any man ever is who is really not very experienced. And I think all of this normality, in conjunction with things like vampires and haunted hotels and things like that, appeals to people. Even a character like Jack Torrance seems to me to be going mad, at least in the book, in a fairly humdrum way. We associate with the alcoholic problems that he's had, because all of us have known alcoholics — particularly destructive ones, people who when they get drunk are apt to put their fist through a window, and the next morning they look at their hand and they say "Ah, shit, how did I do that? I don't remember anything about last night."

And then, of course, when a Nicholson comes along, who's never played an ordinary man in his life, and he's in the movie, I get letters from people saying "How could that dreadful man ever cast Jack Nicholson, I thought he was crazy from the beginning?" But when Nicholson smiles... I met him at the screening of *The Shining*, and he smiled at me, and he said, "Hi, thank you, it was a pleasure to work from your material," and he gave me a big smile... and I thought he was going to attack me. [laughter] Because it's the smile of a man who's insane. Then you realise that he's just being very pleasant, that's just the way Jack Nicholson smiles. I wanted an actor named Michael Moriarty. To me, he would have been much more convincing as an ordinary man going crazy. Or even Jon Voight.

## ON FRIDAY THE 13TH

*The original Friday the 13th...it seemed to me that the drawing power of that film was: "See 13 kids killed in 13 interesting ways and... we promise you that all the girls will take their blouses off." The picture was picked up cheap by Paramount. It opened on Friday the 13th and in the first three days there were all these 13 year old girls that went to see the film. Then they went and told their boyfriends and the boyfriends went and the attendances doubled. So by the end of the week the film was taking twice as much as it was at the beginning, and Paramount had a gold mine on their hands.*



I think for all those reasons, there are a lot of doorways into the work, and also the visual quality has helped a lot, particularly in a generation of readers that are, say, my age on down. I'm 35, and there have always been movies, and when there weren't movies there was television, and even as a reader, I relate to that visual quality. I have more of a tendency to relate to that than I do to stuff that's more cerebral.

*What do you think it says about Society that people are attracted to these sorts of fantasies, where a supernatural element comes into a normal person's life?*

I think they must need a lot of outlets. I think that it says a lot of interesting things; that people are under a lot of pressure, and that they have to vent it in any number of ways, maybe it's fun-fairs and banger races and all of that stuff, and maybe some of it's horror fiction and maybe some of it is the peep-shows, all sorts of things. I also think that it says that people are looking for a secular counterpart to the religion that they've more or less rejected. Last night, in town somewhere, they were having two horror pictures together, *Poltergeist* and *Carrie*, there was a big line, and what I always think is that the First Reformed Church of the Odeon is now in session. [Laughter] Because these people are going there to touch the infinite. They're going there, a movie like *Poltergeist*, a movie like *The Shining*, no matter the madness, the fear, whatever people feel, they also feel a counterpart of the religious awe that our grandfathers felt when they went to church, and the minister would say things like [droning, nasal voice]: "Here are these guys, after Christ gets crucified, and they're all sitting around, and they're all getting drunk, and Peter says 'Did it really happen?' and Matthew says 'Yeah, man,' and Thomas says, 'Well, I think somebody stole the body, and I don't really believe it, if he turned up here I could stick my hand in that hole, I don't believe it.' And so then the guy turns up, right, and says 'Thomas, you want to stick your hand in there?' and Thomas says 'No, no, that's OK, I believe it!'" [Laughter] And somebody heard that story.

*The first cut of Creepshow was over 3 hours, and the finished film is only two. How much plot was taken away from it?*

Not very much. George [Romero] is difficult to work with in terms of length. I found a lot of times when

we were making the picture, I was arguing from a directorial standpoint and he was arguing from a writer's standpoint. In other words, he wanted to keep the words [written in the script], and I was saying things like, "Well, we can take this out, we can montage here, we can change this." In fact, the original screenplay I did for the movie ran about 125 pages, and by the time he'd done it...! George doesn't work from storyboards. He's more at home with words than he is with images, at least, before he actually gets to the place where the camera is. He broke everything down on a shot-by-shot basis, and I mean he breaks it down completely, he's talking about cut-aways and all the rest of it. My screenplay started with shot number one, for instance, which was sort of:

*Fade-in on this house, with thunder and lightning and all the rest of it, and then you get voices, and then people arguing about the comic book, to the final fade-out.*

I think there was something like 237 shots. But when George did his shot-by-shot breakdown, he had somewhere over 1200 – which is approximately the number of shots that's in the movie. His final screenplay, I think was in the neighbourhood of 400, 450 pages long, something like that. Essentially what it all worked out to at that point was two movies, *Creepshow* and *The Crate*. It could have really been a double feature. So that's what we shot, and then we had a job of actually cutting it down.

*I thought The Crate was the best episode in the movie.*

*The Crate* has always been my favourite, I like the way that's cut, that was cut by Paul Hirsch, who cut *Carrie* and *Star Wars* and all that.

*What's happened to the screen version of The Stand you were planning with George Romero?*

I'm going to do the screenplay again, a third draft of the screenplay, this summer. And I think then, we can put it on the rails, we can actually start pre-production. The problem with *The Stand* has always been that we wanted to do it on a negative pick-up basis, which as I understand it means that you go to a number of studios and you say: "This is the property; you get this, this and this, including distribution rights, part of the cassette deal, the cable and so on and so forth; and what we want from you is x number of dollars, and we want to be left alone. Final cut." We've got to have final cut, that's the most important thing of all, that's the

fabled automatic.

*How about Creepshow 2?*

What happened with *Creepshow 2* was that Richard Rubinstein, who produced *Creepshow*, said, "Will you write the screenplay?" But George wasn't going to direct the picture, and so it made me very nervous about writing it. So we did *Creepshow 2* on the basis that we were a team, and that we were going to do it like that. What we finally decided on was that I would do a scenario, which I did, this time for three stories, plus a much more complex wrap-around story than the one that was on the first film, that George would do the screenplay, and then we would have a mutual consultation on directors. Whether it would be one director overall or whether it would be three, I don't know. So that's where it is now. And I did the scenario because I had stories left over from *Creepshow 1*. George said at one point, "We could go on and make *Creepshows* for ever." I'm not sure the British would like them, but we could make them.

*Have you ever had any ambition to direct, yourself?* I'd love to direct. Once I feel about directing the way that a kid feels about – I keep coming back to the subject of sex, maybe it's because I haven't had any in a week, so it may be close to mind – the first time that an adolescent boy has sex, he's not interested in his being able to say, "I was able to do this, therefore I'm no longer a virgin and I don't have to worry about that sort of shit any more." And I'd like to direct once, because I have a feeling that I could probably make a movie that would scare a lot of people very badly. I think I have the capability, but I'm not sure. I might really screw it up.

*Do you think it would be easy for you to manufacture the opportunity to direct?*

I could do it now, and I've been offered... I was offered *Firestarter*. As a matter of fact, I was even offered the chance to direct for the fabled Milton Subotsky. But my kids are all very young, my daughter is 13, my son is 11, he was in *Creepshow*, he's the little boy who gets belted around in the beginning. And I have another boy who's 6. And my wife doesn't want me to do it. She says, "Look, you want to be away on a film shoot for five months? And then you can come back and you can spend another six months cutting this film?" And in the meantime, you know, your kids want to ask to see your driver's licence when you come home, to make sure that you are who you say you are. And I don't really want that.



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# A Starburst Interview with DARIO ARGENTO

**Dario Argento first came to light as a major creative force in Italian cinema with the release of *The Bird With the Crystal Plumage* in 1970. He followed up this success with *The Cat O'Nine Tails*, *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* and *Deep Red*, all in the same genre and made with Argento's customary attention to detail. The Supernatural was the connecting theme for Argento's brace of Horror movies, *Suspiria* and *Inferno*. Alan Jones managed to track down the elusive Argento, and his actress wife Daria Nicolodi, for an exclusive interview just before the British release of his long-awaited new thriller, *Tenebrae*.**

Here's the bad news. With *Tenebrae* his biggest box-office success to date in his native Italy, Dario Argento, still the premier force in Continental horror/thriller film circles, is in no hurry to start work on another film just yet. And the good news? His next film will more than likely be the long-awaited last part of the trilogy he started with *Suspiria* and continued in *Inferno* concerning the diabolical Three Mothers.

"I wanted to wait some time before doing the third part. My ideas about it at the moment exist only in short story form and is as yet untitled. I have been preparing it for two years now and although the Mother of Tears did feature in *Inferno* as everybody guessed, I don't think it will be important to have her as the main character because I want it to be as different from *Suspiria* and *Inferno* as both of those are to each other. *Suspiria* dealt with sorcery and *Inferno* with alchemy. I haven't had any clear feelings about the third part yet apart from the fact that it will be more violent than the preceding two. I'm not in a desperate hurry to do it though at the moment. I'm more in a hurry to live my life again to the full—so the end of the trilogy can wait."

So much for my theory that *Inferno* contained the second and third parts of the trilogy all in one—based mainly on the fact that we see the music professor chalk up on a blackboard the words "The Final Part" in the first scene set in Rome. But at least we have been given the opportunity to make such wild conclusions which is more than Argento fans in the States can say. Even now the film is still on the shelf at 20th Century-Fox. "Actually I think anybody outside of Italy was lucky to see it. While we were shooting there were big managerial changes going on and all the films given the go ahead by the preceding head of production were caught in limbo. It wasn't just *Inferno* but a few other pictures as well. I'm slightly angry about it because I have a lot of American friends who are anxious to see it but there is really nothing I can do."

The Three Mothers, of course, were never mentioned in *Suspiria*. It was only after the huge worldwide success of the film that Argento got the idea of a trilogy. "It all stemmed from a book called *The Confessions of an Opium Eater* by De Quincey. In it he said he wanted to write a book about The Three Mothers. Well, he never got round to it—so I did it instead!"

But then that is why Argento has been quoted as saying *Suspiria* and *Inferno* nearly killed him in the writing stages. "I write alone for months on end in a self-imposed jail-like situation. Maybe for one month nothing happens and I just end up staring at a blank wall waiting for imaginary ghosts and shafts of moonlight to give me inspiration. I punish myself if I don't come up with something and I deny myself everything. No television, no movies and no going out at all even. Eventually my second soul finally gives in, says 'You win,' and I get my ideas. It is for these reasons that my films come from the heart and I think it shows. Nobody tops me in Italy because I go through such a rigorous process for the end result. *Inferno* was the worst experience of all as I had to sacrifice a lot to make that film, like the affection of people close to me. But you can't joke about these things or do them by halves. Actually shooting a film is easy. I'm always smiling and the cast and crew treat it like one big holiday. *Suspiria* especially where we were usually up all night drinking beers."

An example of Argento's arduous work process is the Central Park scene in *Inferno* where bookseller Kazanian has gone to drown cats in a lake. "We were staying in the St Moritz hotel in New York and our view overlooked the lake in the park. During the day it was lovely but I couldn't get over how different the ambience was at night. We also heard about a legend surrounding it concerning lots of strange animals and reptiles that were supposed to inhabit at night that were unknown species. I found this irresistible and decided to add the extra episode in *Inferno* as an homage to the eeriness of the place."

As has been widely reported, the genesis of *Tenebrae* was based on a frightening incident that directly involved Argento when a more than keen fan got hold of his number at the Los Angeles Hilton Hotel and made vague threats on his life. It is a lot more than that too as Argento wanted to put across the very atmosphere he felt surrounding Los Angeles—the home of senseless crime. "To kill for nothing says it all really. If you kill for money or to achieve a goal, I can understand that even if I can't condone it. But when that gesture has no meaning then it is disgusting. While we were staying at the Hilton, three men entered the lobby with guns and shot dead a Japanese tourist. We also heard about a car driving past a line outside a cinema and shooting randomly at the queue. Why? Maybe that sort of violence does have a warped reasoning behind it. But just imagine if there wasn't! In Italy at the moment we have a killer on the loose called Ludwig. He says he is a Nazi and he has killed three priests, two prostitutes, a couple of junkies and a tramp in the space of two years. He has never been caught. Daria is convinced I am Ludwig because he is very aware of the media and has sent letters to the papers and in one he said that he loved Saint George and ▶



Photo by Steve O'Leary

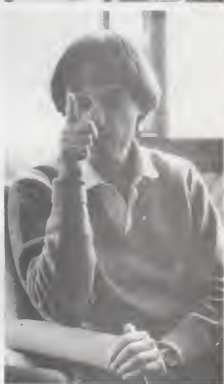


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the legend surrounding the dragon. And I am the only person Daria knows who wears a Saint George medallion. Of course, you can't rule out the fact that it could be more than one person, like in *Tenebrae*. One does kill for the revenge motive admittedly but the other kills for really pathetic reasons like the stealing of a book or for being overtly gay. Hopefully all this type of mythology is contained in *Tenebrae*."

Argento's views on cinematic violence against women are controversial in themselves to say the least. He has found them the equivalent of waving a red rag at a bull to ardent feminists. "*Tenebrae* contains the answer to that question. I like women, especially beautiful ones. If they have a good face and figure, I would much prefer to watch them being murdered than an ugly girl or a man. I don't care what anybody thinks about that or reads into it but you should see the faces of some of the journalists! say that to!"

Being involved in the Italian film circle, it has always surprised me that Argento has never been involved in directing a zombie or cannibal film, those two firm staples of the industry. "I actually think they are stupid. I worked with George Romero, of course, on *Zombies - Dawn of the Dead* but that is all I have ever wanted to do in that direction. You would think I should have an interest as my mother is Brazilian and she told me all about Macumbaloro. Daria and I, at one stage, went to Martinique and Guadeloupe to study zombies. We found out about a lakeside village where all the inhabitants were supposed to be zombies. We had to be like Tarzan and Jane to get there and when we did it was very

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*"I haven't had any clear thoughts about the third part of (the) Suspiria/Inferno trilogy yet, apart from the fact that it will be more violent than the preceding two."*

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scary. They were all covered in insect bites and looked very sad. After a while you can recognise them but you are never meant to have any bodily contact with them especially if you are alone because they don't know the power of their own strength."

In the United Kingdom *Tenebrae* has had a token censorship cut of only 20 seconds which was a pleasant surprise for all concerned. "I don't mind that at all because I want *Tenebrae* to be seen. It is only a film after all and I am hardly Visconti! I would never say, 'Don't touch my masterpiece.' It isn't just here though where I have censorship trouble—it even happens in Italy but we discuss it and work it out. *Zombie* is the film that has caused us the most headaches. It is still unseen in France after six years! The most any of my films has lost is the 40 minutes taken out of *Deep Red* but these aren't just censor cuts but distributors hacking out huge chunks of the story. My original cut of *Deep Red* ran 2 hours and 10 minutes. Three versions exist of it in France which would explain why you have seen German subtitles on some of the scenes. I have recently bought back the rights to *Deep Red* and intend to release it soon intact. None of my movies have ever been shown in Sweden. I am totally banned there but what do you expect when they ban *E.T.* to under 15s?"

Argento has never worked with big names stars—all due respect to Anthony Franciosa in *Tenebrae*, Karl Malden in *Cat O'Nine Tails* and Michael Brandon in *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*. "Big stars need the right story and I haven't written one like that yet. I prefer getting actors of different

nationalities together anyway. I remember when Jessica Harper came to Italy to star in *Suspiria* and after two weeks of working on the film she gave an interview to a newspaper and said that she'd never known anything like it as it was like working in the Tower of Babel. Everybody was speaking to her in different languages. She may have found it confusing but I just love that sort of atmosphere. It is much more fun and means a far more interesting picture will be made."

After editing *Tenebrae*, only one more change was needed in the export print before Argento was completely satisfied with the finished product. "I wanted the actors playing Italians in the film to sound Italian. Perhaps the accents we ended up with do sound a little fake but as they are supposed to be in Italy, I didn't understand the reasoning for them all to speak like Americans. And if the accents do sound funny, so what? I think I like that."

As anybody will know who is familiar with Argento's work, in *Tenebrae* he uses a lot of the same storytelling devices that he has used to good effect in his earlier films. The flashback with a little piece of the jig-saw missing and the at first meaningless but eventually all important dream sequence to name just two instances. "Why shouldn't I use them all the time. I am the same person writing the stories and I like them. They are the reasons why I won't do film adaptations of books or other people's ideas. That is my style so why should I change it? Once I was asked to direct the film version of Stephen King's 'The Stand'. I thought it was a good read but honestly couldn't

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*"I worked with George Romero, of course, on *Zombies—Dawn of the Dead*, but that is all I have ever wanted to do in that direction."*

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understand why I was chosen as a possible director. The only book I tried to do something with was H.P. Lovecraft's "Mythos of Cthulhu" but I honestly couldn't get to grips with it. It is so fantastically well-written that it would really be a shame to touch it and I didn't want to go the Roger Corman route and just use the title and make a story up. It all boils down to the same question all the time. Why do it? Another time I was offered all 27 Agatha Christie novels by Dino De Laurentiis who is like a grandfather to me. He sent me this huge telegram and told me to pick up any title and it was mine to direct. Out of friendship I read all 27 books, a mean feat when you realise a lot of them hadn't been translated into Italian. It was hard work I can tell you. I quite liked *Three Blind Mice* but again I couldn't see the point of me doing it."

And for "The New Hitchcock", a comparison he hates, saying the only thing he and Hitchcock have in common is that they make films, making movies is a means to an end. "Cinema isn't really that important, is it? It makes more sense to have fun and that is the reason why I ration my film excursions to about one every three years. I love to travel a lot and endlessly socialise. I'm not a car builder in a factory who has to do the same thing for all his life. When I am in the process of making a film it is of all consuming importance to me but at the moment, talking to you, it isn't. I refuse to be a slave to the medium. When I shoot and come up with ideas for my films, I'm alone for months and at this point in time I really need to get out there and be part of the human race again."



Above: The superb surrealistic artwork for the 1971 thriller *Il Gatto a Nove Code* (The Cat O' Nine Tails.)  
Right: Dario Argento, the Italian master of suspense, ponders a question about his work.



Photos by Steve D'Amico








# The making of BLUE THUNDER

Die-hard fantasy fans start here: *Blue Thunder*, while not strictly a fantasy film comes with impeccable credentials for in-depth coverage in *Starburst*. The director, John Badham, was the man behind the excellent Frank Langella portrayal of Dracula a few years back and the scripter, Dan O'Bannon, hardly needs any introduction for most readers (*Dark Star*, *Alien*, *Dead and Buried*). *Blue Thunder*

contains some of the best special effects sequences you're ever likely to see and is a tautly etched thriller. The movie opened to stupendous business in the United States and opens in Britain in early August. John Brosnan and Alan Jones tracked down the two creative talents behind *Blue Thunder*, resulting in this comprehensive feature on everything you ever wanted to know about movie helicopters. . .



A contemporary of Steven Spielberg's (they both started out by making tv shows at Universal Studios in the early 1970s) John Badham has a much more varied career than Spielberg, and admittedly a much less spectacularly successful one until now though that could be about to change.

Spielberg got a headstart on Badham when he made his first feature film *Sugarland Express* in 1973 (after the successful theatrical release in Europe of his tv movie *Duel*) whereas Badham had to wait until 1976 when he directed *The Bingo Long Travelling All-Stars and Motor Kings*. It concerned an all-black baseball team in the 1940s and starred Billy Dee Williams, James Earl Jones and Richard Pryor.

Like *Sugarland Express* it was not a great success but Badham followed it up with his personal equivalent of Spielberg's *Jaws*; *Saturday Night Fever*, one of the biggest hits of the 1970s. It made a star out of John Travolta and established Badham as the hottest of the new young directors. . .

But here the similar patterns of his and Spielberg's careers diverged; while Spielberg enjoyed another huge success with *Close*

*Encounters*, Badham chose to make a new version of *Dracula* which enjoyed only moderate success at the box office.

Badham's next film was even less successful, *Whose Life is it Anyway?* which was based on the British stage play about a paralysed man demanding that he be allowed the right to die. After that Badham chose a much more obviously commercial project: *Blue Thunder*, an exciting, all-action movie involving aerial duels between a futuristic helicopter and various other aircraft over and in the streets of Los Angeles.

Badham followed this up with another movie guaranteed to appeal to younger audiences; *War Games*, which concerns a teenage computer expert who gains electronic access to the computer in NORAD (North American Air Defence Command) and starts playing war games with it, with the result that the Americans get the impression Russia has launched a nuclear attack. . .

Recently John Badham visited London to supervise the foreign-language dubbing on *Blue Thunder* so one rare sunny morning I took my trusty prehistoric taperecorder, and my hangover, along to his Dorchester hotel suite overlooking Hyde Park. ►



**Starburst:** Before we get onto *Blue Thunder*, I'd like to ask what it was about the *Dracula* script that appealed to you, John Badham: It was the best thing I'd found after about 18 months of looking at a lot of material. Actually three good properties came along at the same time—I remember that on the very same day I had to make a decision between *Dracula*, *Raise the Titanic* and *Conan the Barbarian*. They were all intriguing in their own kind of way but I decided that *Raise the Titanic* was not a good idea because disaster movies are passe now, and no matter what they say *Raise the Titanic* is a disaster movie—in reverse, sort of. So I thought I'd better stay away from that. I was torn between *Conan* and *Dracula* and who knows what exactly shifted the balance in *Dracula*'s favour. I think I was like a little kid in an ice cream store trying to choose between two flavours. Which ever one you choose you always wonder what the other one would have been like. . . .

**Did you have a particular interest in horror films?**

Yes, I think I've always liked those sort of movies. And the script-writer and I had a lot of fun re-seeing all the previous *Dracula* films, including even Andy Warhol's *Dracula*. We were trying to see what not to do. But I used to read a lot of those *Tales from the Crypt* comic books when I was a little kid. . . .

## JOHN BADHAM ON *BLUE THUNDER*

*"Sometimes (we were flying) just 10 or 15 feet above the roads. I think we were downtown (in Los Angeles) for ten Sundays in a row and that was fatiguing, wearing and very expensive. We were moving like the wind, trying to get a lot of work done in a very short time."*

**Something you have in common with many other film makers of your generation.**

I suppose so. I know when Spielberg, Jeannot Szwarc and I used to make *Night Gallery* episodes we all liked doing them. My one criticism of the film, which I like a lot, is that Langella is too sympathetic in the role.

He might be. He was very concerned with being sympathetic and I admit we might have erred in that direction. . . .

**You then made *Whose Life is it Anyway?* which was a very risky choice of subject matter for a movie.**

Yeah, because when you have to tell someone what the movie is about there's no way you can avoid saying, "It's about a guy who wants to die." And after that you have to practically pick people up and carry them bodily into the theatre. . . .

**How did it do financially?**

Not well. Not well at all. We made a few miscalculations in the way we released it but that wasn't the real reason it failed. It was going to have problems however we released it.

**How did you become involved in the *Blue Thunder* project?**

Dan O'Bannon and Don Jakobov came to me with the material around the time I started *Whose Life*. . . . It seemed like something that would be very exciting but also had something to say about the state

of the world. And it was a kind of action picture I'd never seen before. . . . Did you change the script much? I've heard that the original was too long. Yes, it was long but they're always long. Writers always write long scripts. Not because of any lack of craft but writers tend to put down as many of their good ideas as possible and the script just winds up being too long. As you go along with the development of a script you're continually condensing it down to make it sharp and to the point. The director is usually brought in for that very purpose; to help focus and sharpen the plot and characters. . . .

*What changes did you make?*

Well, the character of Murphy as originally conceived was a lot crazier than he is now. We all readily agreed that a character who goes around stealing helicopters and blowing things up had better be very sympathetic. The audience has to be on his side, whereas if he was just crazy it would have been like Frankenstein's monster on the loose. So that was an obvious, easy change to make. Also the character of Lymangood (Daniel Stern) was never in the original script. Dean Reisner, the writer I brought in subsequently to work on the polishing, created that character and wrote most of Warren Oates' scenes too. But the basic concept and the action scenes were all there from the beginning and

## JOHN BADHAM ON DRACULA

*"The over-riding premise of (Dracula) was that evil very often comes in a very attractive form and when it does, it's at its most dangerous and insidious. We furthered that idea by having Frank Langella as Dracula - he's a very attractive kind of fellow."*

hardly changed, just shuffled about a bit. . . .

*An obvious question: how in the world did you get permission from the Los Angeles authorities to do what you did, such as flying helicopters so low through the streets?*

It took a lot of time. We had to assure them we could do what we said we going to do and that it would be done as safely as possible. But our pilots had very good reputations with the Federal Aviation Authority who have the say-so as to what you can do in the sky. It's when you get down close to the city that the city has the say-so. The city took a lot of advice from the FAA about us and eventually we came to an agreement. We agreed to shoot on Sundays in the downtown areas of LA where people weren't there, and we agreed to have plenty of police with us so that we could block off 12 square blocks at a time and keep all the pedestrians out as well as the traffic. We'd go in and do what we had to do for a few minutes and then come out to let the traffic move through.

*What was the most difficult scene to film?*

All the downtown flying was difficult in that it was so dangerous and time-consuming, going between the buildings and all that, but in my opinion the chase down along the dry river bed with the helicopters going under the bridges was the most difficult of all. It was terrifying to be in any of the helicopters shooting those scenes, I can assure you, or to be standing on the river bed when the

## JOHN BADHAM on War Games

*Starburst: Let's move onto War Games.*

*Would you describe it as science fiction?*

John Badham: I think *War Games*, like *Blue Thunder*, is more science fact than science fiction. Everything talked about in the film is possible. Computers have developed to the point where they're constantly interfacing with one another, and there is the level of technology available where a young kid can do a lot of devious things with his computer. For him it's just fun but the results could be very dangerous - which is what happens in the film.

*Did you have similar problems in trying to get government cooperation?*

Yes, the same sort of problems as on *Blue Thunder*. They said, "No."

*When the government turns down your application is it also suggested that you shouldn't make the movie at all?*

They just say they don't want to cooperate. They're too smart to say, "We don't want you to make this picture," because they know we'd all scream bloody murder and say they're trying to suppress us. . . .

*So how did you go about getting all the necessary equipment?*

Well, most of what we use is not classified material. And one way or another you can get access to find out what it looks like. And the military buys its materials from the same place we do - they have to have Sonys or Hitachis or whatever to produce their video displays, and their computer graphics come from the same computer graphic artists. Also it's not too difficult to find former members of the military who are happy to chat with you and aren't as worried about the image any more.

*It sounds as if it's easier to make this sort of movie in the USA than here. You don't have the Official Secrets Act to worry about.*

Well, I don't think we show anything that sensitive - nothing that hasn't been made public before. A lot of the film is set in NORAD's giant control centre under Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado where they keep track of all the subs and missiles and everything. Well, it's possible to take tourists into this place and all the equipment is explained and you can ask questions about it. And that's how you got your information to

build duplicate NORAD?

Yes, by doing that kind of "research" and snooping around, and occasionally a magazine will come out with some pictures of it. But actually I think our NORAD is more "state of the art" and modern than the government's NORAD because they built theirs 25 years ago and things have progressed quite a bit since then. They'll probably be quite envious when they see our version and say, "Gee, I wish we could afford that. . . ."

*Has there been any official reaction yet?*

In Washington as you would expect the liberal senators and congressmen who have seen it are very enthusiastic, and even some of the conservative politicians. Reagan is supposed to see it at some point though I don't think he's "hopping mad about the movie" as the *Daily Express* said the other day. I think he's just curious to see what's going on. People respond very strongly to the kids in the film and to the human story as much as anything else. One of the most charming things about the movie is that you're totally taken in by these kids and what happens to them. . . .

*What's your next project?*

I don't know. Both *Blue Thunder* and *War Games* have been completed almost simultaneously and are being released almost simultaneously so I'm still sort of spinning from it all. I came back from Cannes where *War Games* was the closing film and that was exciting. It got a huge, very positive audience reaction. I was nervous beforehand because they're very tough on films there. I was sitting there when they gave out the awards and some very famous and respected film makers got booed by the audience when they went to get their awards and I was just horrified - if they do that to these guys what are they going to do to me? But they liked *War Games* and gave it a great reception. . . .

But I have nothing definite planned now. I don't even have anything in the works that I can tell you about. Not even something I can fib about to give you an end to your piece. I'm going to have to make a movie up so that people aren't stuck for something to end their interviews on. . . .



helicopters flew straight over your head. Because if one little thing went wrong and the helicopter splattered on the side of the river bed it would have meant the end of everyone in the river bed as well.

There have been a number of accidents involving helicopters on film sets, such as Boris Sagal's death and the *Twilight Zone* disaster. We'd done all of our filming before the *Twilight Zone* accident took place nonetheless my pilots were extremely careful, sometimes driving me to distraction when I wanted to go faster and they would insist on setting everything up very carefully. I knew if anything went wrong I'd never hear the end of it so I said, Okay, and would sit and wait for them. For example, that scene out in the desert where they're testing the helicopter in the fake town shooting the cars and the cut-out people—I think I had to wait a day and a half while they tested explosives to make sure they didn't go up too high and endanger the rotor blades of the helicopter which was flying very low nearby. The amount of explosive in each charge had to be carefully measured and balanced.

Which is what happened on the *Twilight Zone* set...

Exactly. When the *Twilight Zone* thing happened I thought, *Ohmigod!* That's why we were standing around so long on *Blue Thunder*—that's what the pilot said would happen if those explosives got too big, that it would take the helicopter out. I just accepted what they said at the time and I didn't like standing in the desert for a day and a half while they fiddled with all this stuff but when I heard about *Twilight Zone* I was so glad I did.

Do you think the *Twilight Zone* accident will force film makers to be more careful in future?

I hope so. There does seem to be this dangerous demand for ever increasingly exciting stunts but no movie is worth anyone getting hurt—no terrific stunt is worth that. I gather you weren't allowed to fly real jet fighters over LA in *Blue Thunder*?

We couldn't get them from the government. The government insists on approving a script before they will let you have any of their equipment and they would not approve our script, which is understandable considering what we have the government doing in the story. So we had to resort to motion control photography. It was very difficult because putting models into a real background with daylight, etc, requires everything to look totally real. If we could have done it at night it would have been a lot easier. We did about 27 motion control shots—and they were very expensive. Roughly \$20,000 a shot and that was as economically as we could do them. George Lucas's company were originally going to do them but then they weren't available so we found a group of young fellows called Dreamquest who do sub-contracting work for Lucas. This was their first major undertaking but in spite of the fact they all looked 12 years old we had a good time with them and they did terrific work. And under very difficult circumstances.

I got so encouraged by what they were doing I began throwing them things that had never been done before as far as I knew—such as the missile flying towards the building. We just took a camera up in a helicopter, pointed it at the building and flew straight towards it, and then somehow it was the Dreamquest boys job to put a missile in to the shot. And it couldn't just look superimposed, it had to look real. And that was difficult because the camera was moving all over the place—there was no fancy motion control equipment in the helicopter. It was the kind of thing that would make Al Whitlock crazy. Al Whitlock would



refuse to do that kind of shot because it's just too hard to do. He's very adventurous and will try anything but I know for a fact he wouldn't try that one but these guys are maybe young enough and foolish enough, and good enough, to bring it off...

I liked the barbecued chicken sequence (a missile hits a Chinese take-away joint and the street is suddenly filled with barbecued chickens).

Yes, that was fun. It was a very silly time when we were filming it. I think there are photographs of me somewhere wearing a giant rubber chicken's head while signalling with flags for the chickens to fall. We were quite giddy by that point.

You obviously had to do a lot of flying yourself

## A CAPSULE CRITIQUE BY ALAN JONES

It is the ultimate helicopter. A high-tech futuristic Orwellian flying machine that can hover silently and be flown in all weather conditions. It is an invisible eavesdropper in the night sky and its super-sensitive detection system can pick up a whisper behind locked doors and videotape through six inch walls with its thermographic scope, operated by a remote control attached to the pilot's console. A deadly bird of prey, it can swoop down on its target with a window deafening roar. Its flight is



to make the film. Do you like flying in helicopters?

I do now. I did several hundred flights during the shooting and got to really enjoy it. I was even learning to fly the helicopter as we went along. They'd let me take the controls when we were in a safe area but it was just on the level of putting your son on your lap and letting him steer the car but nonetheless it was great fun. But Roy Scheider actually got very good at it because he was flying quite a lot. By the end of the filming he was landing and taking off and that's a really good level of skill.

## DAN O'BANNON

### A STARBURST INTERVIEW BY ALAN JONES

Screenwriter Dan O'Bannon's career has been chequered to say the least. His earliest work was co-scripting chore on John Carpenter's debut movie *Darby Star*. From there he wrote the original screenplay for *Alien* and after legal wrangles was awarded sole screenplay credit by the American Writers Guild. This seemed to irritate his *Alien* producers and resulted in some name calling within the pages of a certain American fan-oriented publication. Now, with *Blue Thunder*, O'Bannon has proved he is a screenwriter of no little talent. Alan Jones interviewed him in Los Angeles.

The script for *Blue Thunder* was co-written by genre favourite Dan O'Bannon from his own original idea. His co-writer, Don Jakob, was an old friend from film school whose work O'Bannon admired. They had kept in close contact since their early days in a commune for impoverished students and when *Alien* was finally released they sat down together for the first time and finished the script in December 1978. By February 1979 they had a deal and *Blue Thunder* was ready to roll. O'Bannon got the idea for the film one day when he decided to go to the supermarket for some groceries. "It was the middle of the day and the supermarket was only 100 yards away when suddenly I heard this noise above my head. I looked up to see one of the then newly instigated L.A. helicopter squad pacing me at my walking speed. There was no reason for him to do this as I wasn't doing anything wrong or suspicious, it was just that he was having fun. He followed me every inch of the way up until the doors of the market. I got really annoyed about it. There they were having a ball at my expense and privacy. I took this premise into the realms of absurdity—I would give them the huge infusion of technology they seemed to desire so they could literally play God with one of these

machines. Not that they really need all of it because even now these helicopter patrols drive everybody crazy. They have no mercy on us poor unsuspecting citizens as they fly their machines low and loud at all hours and turn on their spotlight—which is called the Night Sun by the way—and train it on your house, just to be annoying half the time. When I originally thought of the idea it had a very serious purpose behind it, imbued with a slight fantasy element. If I have any complaint about the film at all it is that it is more of a fantasy cartoon in John Badham's hands than we had planned."

*Blue Thunder*'s title is a deliberate stab at novelist Joseph Wambaugh according to O'Bannon. "I find his image of the police as contained in his novel's titles slightly ridiculous. The New Centurions, The Blue Knight, The Choirboys, etc.—they are the saintly guys in blue out there keeping us, the barbarians, from destroying civilisation! Originally I had called the screenplay *Blue Thor* because the Roy Scheider character sees himself as the God of Thunder and Lightning who rides a chariot through the sky pulled by the sun, dispensing thunderbolts on us mere mortals. The allegory was there, but just as we were about to hand it over to Columbia, Don implored me to change the title as it sounded too strange, so I caved in. As it stands *Blue* applies to the police and *Thunder* to the screaming Dolby soundtrack!"

After his depressing experience on *Alien* that still fills him with bitterness, O'Bannon decided from the start not to get too involved in the making of *Blue Thunder*. "I argued and fought incessantly on *Alien* and I was determined not to ruin my health again on *Blue Thunder*. All I did really after writing the script with Don was to watch them shoot the more spectacular stunts in downtown L.A. I wanted to see how they staged them for future reference. I'll say this for them, they spent a fortune and really did it well. They built everything we described at vast expense although it actually looked better in reality than it does on the screen. For some reason it tended to translate smaller in scope and size."

The stunts O'Bannon is referring to were filmed as long ago as Summer 1981, so why the long delay until its release here this July? "The film was finished and in the can last Summer and it seems that Columbia do feel exceptionally leisurely towards it. It was going to be released in February but a preview held in Seattle got such a favourable response that they decided to hold what they now considered a potential blockbuster until this Spring. I think all this corporate thinking about what time of year is best for a picture is all superstition. The picture is either going to work or it isn't. It doesn't matter what it's against and when it's released, the long lines standing outside in the rain prove that. Mind you if it was released on the same day nuclear war was declared, then I suppose there might

be some impact. ..."

When John Badham, who was the last minute addition as director, decided to take some of the edge off of O'Bannon and Jakob's implied criticism of police power, it did rattle the writers somewhat. "It was always meant to have fantastic conclusions for sheer entertainment value mainly because I like that sort of concept and it was a nudge to say, look, let them keep this up and this is what is going to happen. But when some of the support pins of that story are pulled out you are left with the more shallow spectacle of a romp through the skies in a super machine. It certainly wasn't written like *Raiders of the Lost Ark* but that is certainly how it stands now. Still there is an incredible variety and range in one director's interpretation of a script to another. It is very exciting. I'll give Badham that, but as was the case with *Alien* the rather dense characterisations were stripped down by the makers which meant that we were attacked in the trade reviews for our "sketchy" characterisation. I don't object to the characters as portrayed in the film but just from the continued attack of my talents as a writer when it wasn't my fault at all, as it was taken out of our hands."

O'Bannon and Jakob's tried and tested rapport on *Blue Thunder* (O'Bannon says that many of the best scenes in the film are Jakob's) meant another collaboration was in order and it happened to be the ill-fated *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* for M.G.M. "David Begelman hired us to write it and me to direct. It was just the basic idea of the classic tale with a contemporary setting. Multiplying broomsticks did not feature at all, it was simply about a sorcerer and his assistant who does what he isn't supposed to and causes tremendous magical problems. It took us an age to write and then M.G.M. caved in on itself and passed. I was really looking forward to it, as well."

Since that doomed project, O'Bannon has worked on *Heavy Metal* and his most recent credit is writing the script for Tobe Hooper's *The Return of the Living Dead*. He would still love the chance to direct his self-penned script, *They Bite*, but there is one thing he won't be doing in the future—lending his name to a project like *Dead* and *Buried* that he had absolutely nothing to do with. "Al Ronald Shusett needed was my name to get it off the ground. I knew the script needed work and he promised he would deal with it and not make it anything I would be embarrassed about. I trusted his taste and with grave misgivings accepted the 10,000 dollar fee. When I saw it I realised he hadn't changed one word of the original script I had read and I hated it but as he pointed out I couldn't take my name off it. In print I can, though, and I want my views on the subject on record. He wanted me to do the same scam with *Phobia* but I refused. I swore after that that I would never do anything like that again."

illuminated by a 30,000,000 candlepower searchlight. A computerised gunsight can automatically position six 20 millimetre cannons and it can fire 4,000 rounds a minute. It is a surveillance tool with the capacity to control, monitor—and even devastate—a large part of any city. And they call it *Blue Thunder*.

*Blue Thunder* is an exciting action adventure that like the recent *Mad Max 2* is absolutely jam packed with thrilling, involving action. It concerns the conflict between a straight arrow cop and a handful of military and government elitists who have developed this special helicopter to

help crowd control in Los Angeles during the 1984 Olympic Games. It begins with L.A. police chopper pilot Roy Scheider investigating the death of a female city council-woman at her home and ends in a breath-taking aerial special effects extravaganza with him (illegally) taking command of the helicopter and battling F-16 rockets among the Californian sky-scrapers. *Blue Thunder* is extremely well directed by John Badham and while really only borderline quality, knocks its only real recent equivalent—*Firefox*—for six. Prepare yourself for the surprise hit of the summer from Columbia.

### Blue Thunder (1983)

Roy Scheider (as Murphy), Warren Oates (Braddock), Candy Clark (Kate), Daniel Stern (Lymanwood), Paul Roebeling (Kelan), David S. Sheiner (Fletcher), Joe Santos (Montoya), Malcolm McDowell (Cochrane), Ed Bernard (Sgt Short), Jason Bernard (The Mayor), Mario Machado (Himself), Anna Forrest (Nude Lucy). Directed by John Badham. Screenplay by Dan O'Bannon and Don Jakob. Director of Photography John A. Alonzo. Art Director Sydney Z Rubinstein. Special Effects Supervised by Chuck Gaspar. Associate producer Gregg Champion. Executive Producers Phil Feldman and Andrew Fogelson. Produced by Gordon Carroll. Time: 110 mins

Cert: 15

# A Starburst Interview with ULLI LOMMEL

by Alan Jones

Every once in a while a film comes along that makes people sit up and take note. Such a film to command this type of attention was *The Boogey Man* (The *Boogey Man* in GB) which within these pages I said was "A very quirky and perverse story unpretentious in treatment and a superior addition to the stalk and slash genre." This supernatural, low-budget quickie was even more of a surprise coming as it did from writer, producer and director Ulli Lommel, a one-time king-pin of the German based Rainer Werner Fassbinder clan of film-makers.

I was intrigued to know why Berlin-born Lommel, who started out making "Festival" films geared at the art-house circuit like *Tenderness of the Wolves* and *Adolf and Marlene*, had wound up in Los Angeles creating exploitation horror features aimed at the potentially more profitable grind-house one. Because on the strength of *The Boogey Man* he has no less than four films ready to be released and one suspects that he intends to be even more prolific in a field he so obviously enjoys and one that is now more than ever ripe for his brand of originality.

Lommel lives with his wife in a smart West Hollywood home that doubled as a location for the upcoming sequel *The Boogey Man 2*. His wife, Suzanna Love, writes with him and stars for him and they met in America when Lommel first came to New York with his last Fassbinder production *Adolf and Marlene*.

"It was being presented at the Montreal and Chicago Festivals and I was invited to go to New York to discuss a possibility of a sale to a major releasing company. I was based in Paris at the time, but I liked it so much that I decided to stay. My first couple of films there were semi-documentaries. One was called *Blank Generation*. Then I did *Cocaine Cowboys* for Andy Warhol, but I wasn't very happy with that either and I was proved right when it didn't work commercially. I knew then that I had to do something aggressive and exciting with a lot of energy. So I looked back and noted that my most successful film was *Tenderness of the Wolves* which most definitely fell into the horror category dealing as it did with man's dark side. I recognise my affinity for those type of subjects, so I decided to do a supernatural film where I wouldn't be bound to reality because violent reality to me is something like the Bader-Meinhoff bombings. *The Boogey Man* was born when I hit on the idea of a mirror containing his soul because this was something supernatural that was cinematically image conscious. It was a very intense shoot because we shot it very fast, day and night. The budget was 300,000 dollars but the special effects cost us nothing. We did it all ourselves, so when you saw the kid with a sliver of mirror imbedded in the sole of his shoe - that is precisely what it was."

On the last day of shooting *The Boogey Man*, Lommel decided to take a holiday and ended up in Los Angeles, staying at the Tropicana Motel where the film was edited in



Above: bloody mayhem from *The Bogey Man*.  
 Right: More of the same as *Little Willy* gets to work with a knife.

six weeks. "I didn't like it at first but found that the dullness made me want to work a lot. It is too easy to get jaded here and everybody has to make the choice of either being constantly stoned or go into a working craze to combat that. So it was good that just as our money ran out I started making *Olivia*."

*Olivia* is Lommel's *Marnie*. The title has since been changed for various overseas markets to *Double Jeopardy* as distributors complained that it sounded too much like something to do with Sir Laurence, the Dickens musical and the female singer of "Physical". It is the story of a girl who has had a traumatic childhood because her mother was killed by a G.I. on London Bridge. She grows up in London with the bridge as her focal point and when it is moved to Arizona brick by brick, she marries an American so she can always be with it. She starts a new life but the past catches up with her when she least expects it. It is an ingenious film filled with invention and atmosphere but it hasn't endeared Lommel to the American censors at all because they gave it an X rating, meaning a limited commercial future, due to its strong combination of sex and violence. "This film has taken up a year of my life. In the beginning they objected to the film in general but after Suzanna had spoken to the female head of the board we managed to end up with only 8 minutes of cuts. What's so crazy about all this is that there was one scene I wanted to cut out myself where a man gets killed by having his electric toothbrush forced through the back of his neck. They didn't object to that but caused such a fuss over a miniscule shot of a man unzipping his trousers. What morals are upheld in America when you can't show that but you can show a





Top left: A chic shot of Suzanne Love in shades as Olivia (like *Double Jeopardy*). Top right: In the same film Olivia and her husband, Richard (Jeff Winchester), engage in some cheer-play. Above left: A scene from *The Bogey Man* in which the malevolent evil force rips a girl's blouse to shreds. Above right: The mirror cracked in *The Bogey Man*. Right: Suzanne Love seems apprehensive in a scene from *Olivia*, produced and directed by Ulli Lommel.







that. I filmed it in San Francisco and it is my most expensive film to date because I used name stars."

*The Boogey Man 2* came about because of the vast amount of money the original made for distributor Jerry Gross in America. "It had been on the cards for a long time but I didn't want to do it as I felt I would be exploiting myself. Then one day some financiers came to me and said 'Here's half a million dollars. We don't care what you do, just make sure that it is called *The Boogey Man 2*'. So I decided to make it autobiographical and wrote a story about a European filmmaker who lives in Hollywood after making two arty films and a girl who comes to him from the East Coast and tells him the plot of the first film and says it is all true because it happened to her and look, here is a piece of the actual mirror. Everyone around him thinks this is a great idea for a film, so he throws a big party and invites producers and starlets who want to be involved and it is during these festivities that the Boogey Man makes his reappearance and kills everybody. The sequel incorporates about 20 minutes of highlights from the first film and I love the central idea of the Boogey Man not wanting to be exploited. You will have to go back to your basic Agatha Christie to find out who is masquerading as the evil spirit."

After filming a victim getting impaled on a car exhaust pipe on location in his own garage, Lommel turned to more traditional horror with his next film, *The Devonville Terror*. It is about how a small community carries its witch-hunting mentality 300 years into the future and starts condemning three seemingly innocent women for their modernistic behaviour. The film has a lot in its favour including a climactic head explosion and *Raiders*-type melting face. It stars Donald Pleasence who according to Lommel was the nicest person he has ever worked with. "He

was so sweet and understanding and told me afterwards that it was the best time he has ever had on a movie set. When we shot with him everybody was so well-behaved and quiet. It was amazing. I'm convinced it was because he was English."

Lommel likes the field he is at present working in for a variety of reasons. "It's anti-establishment. Punk rock, almost. I like working in what is essentially an anarchic area. I'd rather do this and do what I want to do rather than deal with a multitude of studio people. There is far more freedom and less interference - unless you count the weather."

Having put on film some of the more bizarre examples of brutal death, does he think his films are immoral? "My murders are never disgusting. Torturing someone in a concentration camp is disgusting but I don't feel my films have that sort of negative sensibility. I actually want to make a film set in a fast food restaurant where one night the machinery goes berserk and seeks revenge on the consumer. That is an extreme example of how amusing it can get and why I feel my films are harmless. I can understand someone watching my films, or *Friday the 13th* for example, and exorcising their wish to mutilate or whatever, but I feel I use my own intuition in knowing how far I can go in that direction."

All this visibility and dedication has certainly paid off for Ulli Lommel. At the 26th Annual Show-A-Rama convention in Kansas City this year he was voted "Independent Director of the Year". And his charming wife Suzanna was named "New Star of Tomorrow". "It was difficult in the beginning to find people who you could trust and ones that you would really like to work with again. Slowly I have found a crew who I enjoy using over and over again. Perhaps that really is the key, because although at the moment I'm exhausted after a hectic schedule, I know I will be wanting to work again in the very near future."

murder by toothbrush! The ratings board here though is completely financed by the major studios so it can be seen as protecting them from anything they wouldn't deal with and therefore seen as a potential threat. It could be that *Olivia* is a threat in the market place so they don't want independents coming up with any stuff that could make money. Thank heavens I had other films to do as the situation would have driven me mad eventually, I'm sure."

One of these other films was *Brainwaves* starring Tony Curtis and Keir Dullea. "Suzanna is a woman who has an accident and ends up in a coma. A doctor says he has a special computer that can mobilise certain areas of her brain so she can function properly again. However, she finds out she is really someone else and the film is about how she deals with

# A Starburst Interview with LOU FERRIGNO

So, Popeye was right... I'm sitting in the multi-star restaurant (so are the multitude of stars) of the Hotel Carlton, in Cannes, waiting for Sybil Danning and watching Lou Ferrigno demolish lunch. He's had a melon, whipped cream on the side. Now he's into...spinach. No salt. No butter. After a gulp or two, no spinach leaves. No belch, either.

"I really ask for food that has no salt or fat in it," he explains. "I'm on a low fat diet, basically protein. Fish 'n' vegetables. I don't eat any sweet. I'm very careful of what I eat - it's all a combination of diet and training."

I don't need to ask: what is? He's sitting there, all but breaking through the light-colored shirt. Seventeen years of regimen, so he tells me. That's how the New York City police lieutenant's deaf kid became Mr Teenage America, Mr America, Mr Universe, Mr International and, of course, gave Marvel Comics' *Incredible Hulk* the green light on television.

Lou's green no more - not in any sense of the word. The make-up has been put away. Maturity, along with those amazing muscles, and the whole battle of overcoming his 75% childhood deafness, have taken over. He has a full black beard now. He's *Hercules* today - and one of *Seven Magnificent Gladiators* - in a couple of Cannon Films' quickie trash 'n' blunders shot in Rome, Naples, Pateum, Caracalla, Pompeii and all points BC.

Well, they started out as quickies. Within a couple of weeks' shooting on *Gladiators*, their budgets were increased considerably. Bruno Mattei directed the gladiatorial number, with Lewis Coates (aka, Luigi Cozzi, the creator of Caroline Munro's Stella Starr in *Star Crash*) taking over for Lou's adventures of myth as Hercules, the son of the God Zeus, faced with the legendary twelve tasks...killing off the Nemean lion, the nine-headed Hydra, birds with metallic feathers, a fire-breathing bull, a man-eating horse, the three-headed Geryon Iyes, but with six arms and a two-headed dog, the odd dragon and the entire Amazon army.

No wonder, it's spinach for lunch... You can take Lou Ferrigno out of Brooklyn, but you can't take Brooklyn out of Lou. Because his deafness led automatically to a speech impediment, he sounds like Rocky

*Not much has been heard from muscleman Lou Ferrigno since he hung up his purple pants and turned in his green greasypaint at the end of The Incredible Hulk television series. Now he comes bouncing back, retreading the old Steve Reeves route, as Hercules in an Italian-made offering from the Star Crash director Luigi Cozzi (aka, Lewis Coates). Starburst's man in Europe, Tony Crowley, had lunch with the formidable Mr Ferrigno at the Cannes Film Festival and lived to tell the tale.*

after three more sequels and a cleft palate. He's dour, occasionally (very occasionally) witty: gray smiles, though. He may not be miserable, but he sure looks it. Shy, his wife says, and she tends to say as much, if not more, than he does. Brooklyn-born on November 9, 1951, Lou's in the prime of health, of course. He simply bristles good health at you. His father, Matty, turned him on to working-out in the gym to help find him something to compensate for the deafness that made him the odd kid on the block. This relationship of dominating father and hard-tolling son is vividly captured in the George Butler

documentary about the sport, *Pumping Iron* (1977), set during the 1975 Mr Olympia contest in South Africa.

Lou spent part of his early life on the gridiron of professional football. He joined the Toronto Argonauts as a defensive tackle. He was just too defensive. During a scrimmage workout, he blocked one player's move - and broke both the guy's legs. "I never wanted to hurt anyone," he said and quit the game immediately.

Well, there was still plenty of scratch to be made in bodybuilding. He moved to California where there are more health nuts per square inch than anywhere else in the United States (as Jane Fonda has found out). Sure enough, they rushed to Lou's seminars and competitions, following his exercise and diet regimens religiously.

He was still in training, eager for the 1976 Mr Olympia title now that Arnold had retired. And that's when Universal called about *The Incredible Hulk*.

"Acting was the last thing on my mind when I agreed to *The Hulk*," he said. Inside a couple of years, the one-time sheet-metal worker was a global tele-star and made use of his renewed celebrity by campaigning on behalf of speech and hearing impaired kids and adults alike. "We are all handicapped," he comments, "some more noticeably than others."

That's a very true when you find yourself sitting next to the 6ft 5ins and 255lb collection of amazing biceps, pecs and the rest. He's destroyed the buffet tray by now and is munching on sole filets with more green spinach - no, it's lettuce.

**Starburst:** Were you pleased when *The Hulk* ran its course and liberated you for movies?

**Lou Ferrigno:** Yes. The series went on longer than I expected it would. But I'm not complaining. It made me a very famous star. My name will never die because of that series. I will always have that audience. There's rumours goin' around about maybe coming back with a *Hulk* movie...

**But would you want to tackle it again?**

Well, they never could get anyone else.

"He said, modestly..."

**Mrs F:** Right!

**Lou:** If they could get somebody else, it'd fail. I wouldn't want no one else to play it.

What sort of offers did you get after *The Hulk* - same roles, different paint-jobs?

**Mrs F:** That's what we thought would happen. But, actually, he was offered *Arsenic and Old Lace* on the stage, playing Jonathan, the Karloff role, which sounded an interesting idea. (Karloff originated the

role on-stage; Raymond Massey played it in the 1944 film classic).

**Lou:** And there was a tv series about a truck-driver, nothin' like *The Hulk* at all.

**Mrs F:** But, you know, being his manager, I had an idea about Lou being A Hero. His audience is children and they love him. The world needs a hero. There's not a lot of heroes around. Lou has everything the world needs and the children need. The humanity, the sweetness, the power... So some interesting things came his way, but not in mind with what we'd decided, until these *Hercules* films. Which came first, the beard or the offer?

I started the beard when I got the offer. Took about what - eight weeks to grow.

**Mrs F:** Almost three months.

**What attracted you to Hercules - were you a Steve Reeves fan as a kid?**

Yeah! I'd always fantasised about being big. Watching his *Hercules* films made me realise you could

make your body look like that. See, the body is a potentially beautiful thing, capable of being worked on and perfected. Just like a piece of sculpture. The sculptor has his stone, right, and works away at it. My body is like my stone. I'm my own sculptor. Your body is stone, I'd say!

**"Watching Steve Reeves Hercules films made me realise you could make your body look like that."**

I train about three hours a day. Right now, I'm in the best shape of my life. For the film. 'Cos I wanna show off my body in the films. When Cannon contacted me, I jumped at it. The idea sounded so fantastic. The right thing to do immediately after *The Hulk*. I like to be physical as Lou Ferrigno because I have a





tremendous audience from *The Hulk*. And *Hercules* give me a chance to show a new type of hero. This is an updated Herc?

No!

Oh? One of your producers, Menahem Golan, said the other morning it would be a science fiction

**"I like to be physical as Lou Ferrigno because I have a tremendous audience from *The Incredible Hulk*."**

#### **Hercules.**

He means there's gonna be special effects. Like when I perform the twelve tasks to prove I'm a mortal man. See, *Hercules* has never been done in depth before. We're doing it all. Fighting the dragon...lightning bolts...It's like *Superman*!

You're shooting the two films back-to-back. Is it two films or like *Superman* - one story cut in half?

No, two. The first one is *The Seven Magnificent Gladiators*. The second one is *Hercules*. Two different types of films. We'll see him develop as a man, realising his own strength. And how he wants to be a free man...and performing the twelve tasks.

Have you changed, re-sculptured your shape for the role?

Well, yeah. I had to train to look like *Hercules*. To be in the best shape in chest, arms, legs. In all the body part I gotta show.

(On that perfect cue, Sybil Danning arrives. Lou smiles; almost. Mrs Lou does not. Sybil has a lot of body part she wants to show, too.)

Like I just said, I train three hours every day. Mainly bodybuilding with weights. All different exercises. Just like trainin' for a contest.

Do you have to continue that regimen forever... I mean, to stop everything going slack, limp and dare

I say it, flabby?

I don't have to. I want to. One reason I do it is it makes me feel good. Inside myself. (He orders strawberries. About a field of them)

Well, it all helps you make you clearly identifiable on the street.

I love the public reaction. I'm used to it. I've been so popular for many years, it's kinda like second nature.

And the kids aren't scared of you? I mean, children are often frightened stiff by circus clowns, with the make-up and the nose...and they see you as a green monster.

I don't scare 'em. They recognise me! They identify me as Lou Ferrigno. I'm not just *The Hulk* any more. They have a warm feeling towards me because I'm very sensitive as the character I portrayed on television. Kids know right from wrong. They can tell and detect personality quicker than anybody.

What goes down after the films?

I'll go back to television or do other feature films.

Back to tv - after such a long and tiring series. You surprise me.

**Mrs F:** In showbusiness, the most normal life style an actor can hope to have is by being in a tv series. They go to work in the morning, come back every night. Work five days a week. You can plan your life that way. Have a family. Have a lifestyle. Have holidays. And we're that very normal kinda people. We're not the regular Hollywood couple. We're real normal. You could put us in Iowa and we'd probably fit in real good. We go to bed at 9pm. We get up at 6am. We live healthy. We don't go to parties. We don't smoke or drink. Lou doesn't like to travel - yet we travel all the time. If you do a series, you don't have to travel. You get to your own home every night.

Lou: I'm a home-body, personally. I travel a lot for my work. And flying's hard on me. I like to have one base. We live in Santa Monica, California (not that far from Muscle Beach at Venice Beach). We have a two-storey place, like a big, huge summer cottage home. County French, she calls it!

With your own gym, of course.

No. We have a gym nearby called Jim's Gym. (I think

### **HERCULES: The Story**

As the incredible Herc, Lou Ferrigno is sent from the heavens by an Mike Zeus to settle the hash of couple of B.C. beddies as full of world domination games as any Bond for *They're Killing Me* and his daughter Arianna (William Berger and Sybil Danning) who have swiped the sacred sword of the goddess Hera, giving them power over the Phoenix, the great bird beset consumed by its own fire and burning eternally while their captive inside the volcano of their Crete kingdom.

*Hercules* can't wait underground for long. Not with his strength - his body and soul were forged in the flames of a thousand stars, turning the script by director Lewis Coates (aka Luigi Cozzi) Disposing of a couple of sword-wielding warriors at a tournament, wins our hero the job of bodyguarding King August's daughter. Cast-suspense (and a hint of a romance). Nice body. Nice job. Not easy though. Poor old Hercules is duped in the sea in chains, falls in with the evil sorceress Circe, retrieves her magic amulet from the bowels of Hades, after tackling the triple-headed Hydra, not to mention a visit of fire and ice in the Temple of Apollo (Saul's favorite). Arianna lusts after Herc, wanting to propagate a new master race of Haggling Ferrignos. He's more than an *Cosmo* and in true *Steve Reeves* chain-busting fashion, sets off on his final task - rescuing the virgin princess from the gaping maw of the Phoenix, outting up *Mino* and Arianna en route, with the aid of the Sword of Hera, before this big volcanic finish...and the upcoming sequel which Lou shoots this summer.

that's what he said!) If I had a gym at home, it'd be boring! I need to get out a bit and see people.

**Mrs F:** We have a little baby – just over a year – and she's with us all the time. She's been travelling since she was a month old. She has her own passport.

*What kind of TV series do you have in mind, then?*

**Mrs F:** He'd make a great cop.

*He'd make two great cops...*

**Mrs F:** But he must stay A Hero. That's his image.

*Who are your own heroes, Lou?*

Now or years ago?

Throughout life.

Clark Gable. And now my favourite would be Sean Connery. I love him as an actor.

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**"They recognise me. They identify me as Lou Ferrigno. I'm not just The Hulk anymore."**

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**Mrs F:** He's better with age. That man's like a fine wine. He's much better than James Bond. He's getting on and on, and he's getting better.

*How do you see Gable and Connery movies on the box if you don't stay up for the late-late-show?*

I tape 'em. We fix it for midnight and it tapes everything. That's our favourite toy.

*What do you do around the house all day if you only pump iron down at the gym?*

I make a lotta furniture. Very good with hands. I'm very creative. Anything that comes to my mind, I make. Spend a lotta time woodworking in my workshop. Making furniture for the house and for friends – 'cos we have no more room in the house!

**Mrs F:** Lou has one of the finest workshops in all of California.

*He should go into partnership with Harrison Ford.*

I make my own designs – for both the look and the comfort of the furniture. We like everything comfortable. So, yeah, I have all the basic machinery. I used to be a machinist, and I'm still good with my hands.

*You just need a bigger house, it seems.*

Well, after these two *Hercules* films I could afford a bigger house.

**Mrs F:** We have four bedrooms.

*I'll come and stay! Except you're never there.*

Right. We've been all over Egypt, Australia, the Philippines, Sweden. I don't mind appearances like that. They come and go quick. And I make fantastic money.

**Mrs F:** He makes all these personal appearances as Lou Ferrigno. See, we have Lou Ferrigno candy-

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**"Spend a lotta time woodworking in my workshop. Making furniture for the house and for friends."**

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bars, vitamins, tee-shirts, shorts, weight-training belts and Lou's course on how to develop your body parts. His book just came out with Simon and Shuster: *The Incredible Lou Ferrigno*.

**Lou:** That's my life story and a body-building book for everyone. How to change weight, lose weight, gain it for different sports. How to motivate yourself. Training for kids, teenagers, adults – everyone.

*So what do you think when you look at the rest of us, Lou? Here I am in rotten shape, sweating like mad because of the heat and dashing all over the festival for this 'n' that, shitting too much, drinking too much. What goes through your mind when you look at someone like me?*

I just hope that people like you, when you look at me, it makes you more health-conscious. That you realise that it takes work to build a good body and a sound mind. That's all I did. I always wanted to be big and build confidence in myself, so I took up weight training. I motivated and educated myself.

**Mrs F:** He's incredible. He really is. He's astounding! I really admire the way he can be so disciplined.

**Lou:** have to be. Especially when I'm doing a film like *Hercules*. I hafta be in top shape. The movie's permanent. The better I look on the screen now, the better I'll always look.

*But all this training, it doesn't sound much fun. You can't have a cream-cake binge when you want to. Sure, once in a while, why not? Ten years from now,*



*I'm not gonna kill myself like I do now. So I might as well take advantage of it now. In ten years, I'll have my cream cakes. And I'll be retired, financially secure and spend all my time in my workshop.*

*Filling all your other houses with furniture.*

*Why not?*

*One last thing...*

*Yeah!*

*What did you think of Conan, The Barbarian?*

*(His eyes glint in something akin to fury; it passes.)* I thought the movie was interesting – but too violent. Too much blood in it, for me. Overall, the special effects were fantastic. Too much blood, though. I think you gotta be careful about that. *Hercules* will be PG-rated. Like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Very clean.







## PSYCHO II

**A Starburst Review by  
Alan Jones**

### **A Brilliantly Ingenious Story**

**P**sycho II is a better movie than anyone had a right to expect. The reasons for this are a superb central performance from Anthony Perkins, (indeed the whole idea would have been inconceivable without him), a brilliantly ingenious complex story that, like *Sleuth*, is guaranteed to keep you constantly guessing about who is doing what to whom and, most importantly, bravura direction from Richard Franklin whose past record of *Patrick and Road Games* proved how adept he was at affectionately recreating the Hitchcockian style.

Trying to duplicate some of the most potent screen shocks of all time must have caused endless problems, but in *Psycho* II Franklin trades on our expectation and serves them all up again with an added slant that gives a powerfully double-edged sting.

It is now 22 years later of course and the misunderstood subtle wit that Hitchcock injected into *Psycho* now emerges as all out black comedy – a fact that the Tom Holland original script trades on all too heavily handily on occasion. But his multi-levelled story – there isn't a trace of Robert Bloch here – is as sharp as the kitchen knife that threatens to send Norman Bates over the brink into insanity once again.

He has been released from psychiatric care, much to the chagrin of Lila Loomis (Vera Miles) and returns to the Bates Motel to discover it has been turned into a sleazy "adult" orientated dive. Horrified, he goes to a prearranged job at a local diner, but after some notes appear supposedly signed by his dead mother, he fires the motel's caretaker and decides to try and get the family business on its feet again as a respectable going concern. Enter Mary (Meg Tilly), a suspiciously friendly waitress from the diner who needs a place to stay for the night and the first of five sensational twists is about to occur.

Franklin and Holland's team effort is a lot cleverer in retrospect than one imagines while watching it unfold. Hitchcock would doubtless applaud the stylistic references his No 1 fan has favoured which is all German expressionism and Louma crane swoops. But he is probably turning in his grave over the concessions to modern day gore-effects. Still, the final shock is a cracker and one of the most jolky upsetting jolts since the final frames of *Carrie* conjures up.



## OCTOPUSSY

**A Starburst Film Review by  
John Brosnan**

### **Great pre-credits sequence – pity about the movie!**

*Octopussy* tries to mix a *Raiders of the Lost Ark*-style fairy tale with a relatively serious Cold War plot but the mixture refuses to gel. The *Raiders* part of the film is set in a fantasy India that has only ever existed in the minds of Hollywood script writers; the contemporary section is set in Germany where a renegade Russian general plans to explode an atomic bomb in an American air force base.

*Octopussy* is unusual for a Bond movie in that it has a political message – that the nuclear disarmament movement



is a threat to the West – but in all other ways it breaks no new ground. Like *For Your Eyes Only* it concentrates on stunts and action sequences while eschewing gadgetry, giant futuristic sets (*a la* Ken Adam) and Boleld-type master villains. Admittedly much of the stuntwork is truly amazing, though it's a pity that the stuntman doubling Moore has different coloured hair in many scenes. As for Moore, he is now much too old (and overweight!) for the role and at times looks faintly ridiculous, especially in the love scenes. And I don't know if it's old age on my part too but I found this Bond movie to be much more annoyingly sexist than usual. It reminded me, in its treatment of the women, of one of those awful Dean Martin "Matt Helm" films of the 1960s; embarrassing and old-fashioned at the same time.

See it for the pre-credits sequence (where most of the budget obviously went) and the stunts but during its many *longueurs* shut your eyes and hope that *Never Say Never Again* will be a real James Bond movie. ■

**This month, a slight change of format for Starburst. We've decided that it didn't really make very much sense**

**to scatter our reviews and regular columns all over the magazine. So we've collected them all together in**

**this newly-created section of the mag. We're hoping readers will find this arrangement more accessible**

## RETURN OF THE JEDI

**A Starburst Film Review by  
Alan Jones  
Ode to the Force**

I liked *Return of the Jedi* a lot.

A surprise as I felt *Empire* wasn't hot.

The title was changed from *Revenge to Return*.

But in that debate, I'd always adjourn.

For those expecting new plot revelations

I'm afraid it's just back to those old dissertations

Because everything turns out to be Black and White.

That doesn't mean that the story lacks bite.

Not sure of "The Muppet Show" with Jabba the Hut

As the film is too long it could have been cut.

Also the Ewoks were far, far too cute.

A fact that I'm sure, toy sales will refute.

But I loved the bike chase à la *Mad Max*.

It was enough to make me stop dead in my tracks.

It brought back the magic to this epic saga—

But then all the optics made me gaga-ga.

State of the Art means yet another plateau.

So well done Luke, Leia, Han and C-3PO

Nor must we forget old R2-D2

Despite serving cocktails for Jabba and crew.

Was it me? I missed every word Yoda said.

I agreed with John Brosnan. I was glad he was dead.

But you don't really die in this Lucas branchchild.

You become special effects and to ILMxiled.

Including Obi-Wan and one of the Darth Vaders.

Talk about video games and spaced-out Invaders!

Cinematic pinball to boggle the eyes.

What a relief to see Solo finally get wise.

With all his one-liners, it recalled old times.

Before we knew the Emperor would pay for his crimes.

It still can't beat *Star Wars* as the ultimate thrill.

No more for a while please. I've had my fill.

I cried at the end though, but then I always do.

So Jedi or not—May the Force be with you.

## RETURN OF THE JEDI

**A Starburst Film Review by  
Phil Edwards**

**Lucas wraps saga with great effects,  
too many muppets, dull  
performances and threadbare story.**

Although packed with incident, the major problem with *Jedi* is the poor attention to story, plotting and character development. In fact all three departments really don't have a lot to recommend them and the general feeling coming off the screen is that all concerned (special

## RETURN OF THE JEDI

As this is being written, the third film in the *Star Wars* series is already packing the audiences in the world over. Any options expressed by the Starburst team are merely that. . . opinions. The general consensus of opinion among the writers on this magazine was that the film dragged its feet in the plotting and characterisation department. This notwithstanding, all agreed that it was probably the most fun you'll ever have with special effects in the cinema. The movie tied up all the loose ends from the earlier two films, though to be honest, told us nothing we hadn't already guessed. One word of caution. . . *Return of the Jedi* really does improve with repeat viewings. Whatever you do, don't see it only once!

effects aside) seem to have lost some enthusiasm for the saga. This is most apparent in the performances of some of the leading players, who with a couple of exceptions stroll through parts mouthing the Kasden/Lucas dialogue with about as much conviction as kids in a school play. Even Alec Guinness, back as Obi-Wan mouthing platitudes about "points of view" looks bored.

There's a vague sense of desperation in all the wrapping up of odds and ends which, surely, once and for all, indicates that *Star Wars* was never conceived as an entire opus in the first place, rather it was cobbled together when the first film proved such a surprise hit. The revelations of who is related to who don't matter a bone, the dramatic impact of said revelations is virtually nil and the "story" is little more than a reworking of the plot of the first film. Once again the rebels are up against the Empire and their new version of the Death Star—cue dialogue about "this station is fully operational", etc. Deja vu rules in *Jedi* through repetition of images and situations from *Star Wars* and *Empire*, and yes folks, R2D2 does his cute falling over gag again.

*Return of the Jedi* is film making by numbers, a little bit like those magic painting books where you just add water—no imagination, at least in the script department. Now, you might think that from the above I didn't like the movie, right? Wrong! I thoroughly enjoyed about 60% of it and strangely enough that's about the percentage of the special effects scenes. Far be it from me to spoil any of the fun of the movie by revealing these neat numbers, but every so often I was reminded of the Busby Berkeley films where you think, "Gee, is all that stuff going on back there?" There are times when *Jedi*'s bravura effects—and they are the best you have ever

seen—just blitz you with near overkill. I for one, can't wait to see it again.

## RETURN OF THE JEDI

**A Starburst Film Review by  
Richard Holliss  
Superb entertainment, but could  
have been better**

The Saga Continues. . . claim the posters for the latest George Lucas fantasy *The Return of the Jedi*, the third and possibly last in the popular *Star Wars* series. Like the first two films *Jedi* is a technical tour-de-force and packed to the brim with breathtaking special effects. What is even more noticeable is its similarity to *Star Wars*, especially with regards to the plot. The film actually opens with a massive spaceship flying over our heads. You may remember how the first section of *Star Wars* took place on Luke Skywalker's home planet Tatooine, so just for good measure, so does *Jedi*. There's even an identical battle with another Death Star at the climax of the picture and, en route, Lucas throws in a new version of the Cantina Bar and another duel with light sabres.

Some of the characters mentioned in the earlier films are expanded on, Jabba the Hutt, for example, whereas Boba Fett and Jedi master Yoda are completely wasted. One important plot discrepancy that only confirms Lucas never really intended making any more *Star Wars* films after the first, is the way he has to explain Kenobi's change of mind. In *Star Wars* the old Jedi knight informed Luke that it was Vader who murdered his father and yet in *Jedi* he admits that Vader is Luke's father. It's no wonder that the poor boy seems a little confused.

New creatures like Jabba are interesting and while the Tatooine sequence may appear a little stagey, it proves to be everything that the film *Dark Crystal* should have been and wasn't. The Scout-Walker scene is marvellous and upstages the AT-AT's in *Empire*. However the Ewoks in the same sequence are a bit irritating to watch, resembling as they do teddy bears but at the same time sounding like a bunch of Zulu warriors, and I'm really getting bored with C3PO.

What doesn't work is the unmasking of Darth Vader, the mutilated face beneath the coal scuttle is a let-down, whereas the Emperor, who has a sinister voice and an old hag's cackle, has a face that is the epitome of evil.

The *Star Wars* films are superb entertainment, whether it's John Williams music, the magic touch of ILM or the inventive writing of the screenplay. The only trouble is, I wish George Lucas hadn't paid so much attention to his imitators when he wrote the last installment. I can't help feeling that *The Return of the Jedi* could have been a whole lot better.





## CAMPSITE MASSACRE

A Starburst Film Review by  
Alan Jones

No masterpiece but worthwhile



When John Brosnan interviewed actress Rachel Ward in the pages of *cinema* some months back she mentioned appearing in two horror movies early on in her career. One, of course, was the instantly forgettable *The Forest Eyes* and now we have the chance to belatedly appraise the second of those films, *The Forest Primeval*, or to give it its more down to earth retitling for these shores, *Campsite Massacre*. Unlike *The Forest Eyes* it is a film Miss Ward shouldn't be embarrassed by when reflecting on her successful climb to super-star status due mainly to *Sharkey's Machine*, *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* and television's *The Thorn Birds*.

Even though it is no real showcase for her limited talents, *Campsite Massacre* is a surprisingly well directed and taut addition to *The Hills Have Eyes* school of exploitation. Lushly photographed and using a giant redwood forest location to tremendous effect, the story revolves around a group of campers who set off on a rafting trip. Their bus-driver, the slightly psychotic Eggar (Joe Pantoliano) is very agitated that they plan to camp near an old military installation. Does he know something they don't? As it turns out, yes, he does and when one of the group tells an eerie story around the obligatory camp-fire that night, one of the listeners has a raw nerve hit upon and their fates are sealed. When two young lovers at the height of their passion fall prey to the deranged inhabitant lurking in the forest, the remainder find themselves caught up in a fight for survival. But there are many hurdles to cross before they find rescue, and their pursuer intends to claim more victims for the crude chopping block and preserve pantry back at the only house on the left.

The actions and behaviour of the camp contingent, while not exactly logical, are more sensible than other recent examples in the genre. So all due credit to director Andy Davis for pulling it off so neatly and making us suspend disbelief. And for those who like a smattering of food for thought tossed into their mayhem – rest assured, the allegory to Vietnam which threatens to emerge at various junctures in the scenario eventually does surface to good effect amongst the camera trickery used in the final confrontation. This, I would imagine, can only be attributed to the third screenplay writer credited – Ronald Shusett of *Alien* and *Dead and Buried* fame.

*Campsite Massacre* is tense rather than frightening, a quality which owes a lot to the vicious of the murder weapons used. In one instance the roughly opened tops of canned fruit tins. The oppressive atmosphere of the maniac's tumbling-down shack-cum-house is a contributing factor as well – or perhaps it's just that I'm a sucker for *afresco* horror movies, the best of which is still *Just Before Dawn* which this faintly resembles.

The interest is always maintained throughout the running time of *Campsite Massacre* and it has a disturbing authenticity that I liked a lot. It is by no means any great masterpiece but if you can manage to get through the truly dreadful soft-porn short it will be playing with called *Hellcat Mud Wrestlers* I think you will find the journey worthwhile.

## VIDEO FILE

A Starburst Review Column by  
Barry Forshaw

When a glazed-eyed stupefaction set in after the ninth-still-stall-and-slash ripoff, the adrenalin can only be got on the move again with that all-too-rare entry – an original movie. And one *Dark Night* (Atlantis) – formerly *Rest In Peace* – is, despite some token teenagers – just that. In fact the deployment of imagination – particularly in the corpse-clotted finale – makes one forgive any lapses into cliché (even the customary flow of virtually all contemporary horror movies – one dimensional characterisation: here pretty heroine malicious co-ed, handsome hero, etc.)

Only minutes into Thomas McLoughlin's tight thriller, them, so much as moves them like puppets).

Plotting is concise – the psychic's daughter is involved in a by issuing the pilot and first episode of the supernatural tv those rare birds (like Spielberg's *Duel*) – a tv movie that rises way above expectations for that bland, compromised genre. Matheson's witty and intelligent script (with details such as Barry Atwater's vampire keeping stolen plasma in his fridge) pits Darren McGavin's woolly, dogged reporter against a hostile, unbelieving establishment in a process that was to become tiresome as the series progresses, but is here fresh and vigorous.

corpse have a rather papier-mâché look, it can be said that Raymay – himself a mannikin! – doesn't really "animate" them, so much as moves them like puppets).

Plotting is concise – the psychic's daughter is involved in a sub-plot that seems, at first, a bit meandering – but is cleverly drawn into the macabre final confrontation (which involves a compact mirror reflecting back bio-energy to blast the flesh from the face of an ambulant corpse – novel enough?)

### TV FARE SHINES

Guilt Home Video have shown commendable enterprise by issuing the pilot and first episode of the supernatural T.V. series *Kolchak*, *The Night Stalker* and *The Night Strangler*, both written by Richard Matheson. Looking at *The Night Strangler* again, one is pleasantly reminded that this is one of those rare birds (like Spielberg's *Duel*) – a tv movie that rises way above expectations for that bland, compromised genre. Matheson's witty and intelligent script (with details such as Barry Atwater's vampire keeping stolen plasma in his fridge) pits Darren McGavin's woolly, dogged reporter against a hostile, unbelieving establishment in a process that was to become tiresome as the series progresses, but is here fresh and vigorous.

The sudden, violent appearances of the modern-day vampire are handled by director John Llewellyn Moxey with great skill, and ensure that his silent, super-strong presence is truly menacing. The level of violence is, in fact, higher than the minimal amount usually permitted in tv fare, and further ensures attention throughout.

*The Night Strangler* probably should not be seen immediately after its predecessor; without too vivid memories of the first film, Kolchak's second outing (tracking down an eternal monster in a hidden city underneath Seattle) is an acceptably taut and atmospheric job.

Seeing it right afterwards, however, Matheson's script seems a slavish attempt to recreate the virtues of the earlier film, and Dan Curtis' direction seems sicker than Moxey's.

### DISAPPOINTING CLASSIC

Guilt have issued Dierker's classic 40s ghost story, *Portrait of Jennie* – but, sadly, without the colour and tinting. And, like the recent similarly botched Channel 4 showing of *Stalker*, this really does disappoint.

### RE-TROD SPOOK STORY

When one realises that *The Nesting* (Vipco) is basically just an old-fashioned ghost story (with the occasional nod to current go trends such as a heavy staggering around with a small scythe planted across his face), the thought occurs that this most respectable of literary forms gets too rare on airing in current gothic cinema. Surely film-makers (and their audiences) must soon tire of demonic possessions and psychotic knife wielders, and, hopefully, *The Nesting* might augur a new (though old!) trend.

This said, however, Armand Weston's film is not really novel in anything except the oddest colour processing you'll see in the western hemisphere – characters change their flesh hues from purple to red to blue, grass zips through half the spectrum before settling into a warm hue. But none of this seems to reflect, say, the central character's state of mind. Robin Groves plays Lauren Cochran, an author suffering from agoraphobia (an abnormal dread of open spaces – though I'm sure you know!) who rents a baroque house in the country – only to find it haunted by the victims of a massacre. The ghost story elements are well integrated, but, the film finally fails to cohere. John Carradine does a John Carradine and Gloria Grahame sadly displays none of her once magnetic appeal.

### AVOID

It would require a whole new lexicon of awfulness to convey just how dire *The Alien Dead* (CM Video) is, and it will be at least a week before another video of such stupendous badness is issued. All departments – script, direction (Fred Olen Ray), make-up (the most embarrassing zombies you will ever see) plumb new depths of ineptitude. But it is the acting that will set your teeth on edge like a dentist's drill – and Buster Crabbe's participation can only mean the swimming pool business (his new career) has had a sharp decline.

### TITLE CHANGE

It's "Change The Title and Fool The Punter" time again – if *The Confessional Murders* (RCA) sounds like a film you've not heard of that's because it's really *Pete Walker's House of Mortal Sin* in a new surplice. But the new garb doesn't disguise the fact that this is one of the inventive Walker's lesser efforts, involving a psychotic priest, who shares Norman Bates' mother problems.

All the Walker ingredients are here, particularly the recurrent theme of the guardians of moral values being themselves corrupt (remember the cod dedication of *House of Whoredoms* to our self-appointed censors?). And as usual, there's some skilful drawing of peripheral characters (a young priest chafing against the Roman Catholic church's insistence on clerical celibacy; the working class mother of a young girl driven to suicide by religious guilt). But somehow, the whole thing comes across as contrived – a feeling that becomes stronger as the plot revelations come thick and fast in the last reel. And the reasons are fourfold:

1. Sheila Keith, normally a sheer delight in Pete Walker's films with her malignant, severe matrons, here struggles in vain with an under-written part – and the final revelations concerning her post (as housekeeper to the psychopathic priest) are too bizarre for even the splendid Keith to make convincing.
2. The murders (a violent death by such religious icons as incense burner and communion wafer) do not carry the impact Walker usually accords such scenes.



3. Anthony Sharpe, as the demented clergyman, lacks the conviction Peter Cushing (originally mooted) would have brought to the part.
4. The aforementioned final revelations are both implausible – and – worse – rather dull.

But, despite the foregoing, still worth watching if you've enjoyed the director's other films.



Okay, I've got to admit it – I was disappointed by *Return of the Jedi*. For all its visual marvels it left me, for the most part, unstirred and uninvolved. Some sequences did make my pulse quicken, like the fight on the anti-gravity barge in the desert, and the chase through the forest on the Speeder bikes, but in the main *Jedi* seemed to consist of a series of repeated highlights from the previous two movies. We've got the Death Star and the climactic space battle from Part 1 and the Imperial Walkers and the duel between Luke and Vader from Part 2, to name the obvious examples...

As for the resolution of all the various plot lines they struck me as very predictable and strangely unmoving. And as for poor Luke's discovery about Leia; coming after the discovery that Vader was his father it all seemed a bit ridiculous. What next? one wondered. Would Han Solo learn that Yoda was his long lost mother-in-law?

And speaking of Yoda, his big scene in *Jedi* was the low point of the movie for me (sorry, Yoda fans). For one thing I couldn't understand a damn word he said. Frank Oz deserves an award for the most unintelligible performance of the year. When Yoda finally expired in an optional fade-out I came near to cheering.

Muppetry seems to dominate *Jedi*, unfortunately. Jabba the Hutt, his alien minions and all the other aliens in the movie, including the Ewok teddy bears, had a big touch of the Muppets about them and were unconvincing as a result. Jabba should have been gross but he was simply a joke...

This may have been intentional on Lucas's part; *Jedi* definitely seems more of a children's film than the previous two. The clever tongue-in-cheek humour of *Star Wars*, and which was also present in *Empire* to a lesser extent, is almost entirely absent from *Jedi*, with the exception of a couple of good lines from Han Solo (and the scene where the keeper of Jabba's monster breaks down in tears after Luke has killed it). Instead of humour we have dollops of cuteness. Piles of it. And personified by the Ewoks who are so cute you can hardly stand it... (they're actually more like Wombles than Muppets).

But again Lucas may be demonstrating his usual shrewdness – Little kids are just going to love the Ewoks if the one sitting behind me (kid, not Ewok) was any indication. Everytime the Ewoks appeared this little boy would chortle with glee (the kid, not me).

Yes, Mr George Lucas could, with justification, answer my every quibble with *Jedi* by saying, "I didn't make the movie for cynical, aging film critics, I made it for the kids. If adults like it, fine, if they don't, tough. By the way, could I interest you in a toy Ewok?"

## IT'S ONLY A MOVIE

A Film Column by  
John Brosnan



And I've got to admit that Lucas has probably given the kids and the *Star Wars* fans everything they wanted and expected in the final part of the trilogy. It's just that for me the magic of seeing *Star Wars* for the first time wasn't recaptured by watching *Jedi*. But that's inevitable, I guess.

As I said in my review of *Empire* back in *Starburst* 23 (gosh, three years ago!) a film maker is faced with an impossible task when it comes to making sequels. He has to try and reproduce the ingredients that made the original a success with audiences while at the same time attempting to do something new and original. With *Jedi* Lucas has played it safe – there is very little that is either new or original in the movie but the audiences it's aimed at are not, I feel, going to complain. They've been exactly what they wanted.

Actually I must confess to being happy at seeing the Death Star make a reappearance in *Jedi*. I missed it in *Empire* and said as much in my review in issue 23. I'm flattered that Lucas, obviously a regular *Starburst* reader, followed my advice on this matter at least.

But as welcome as the Death Star's return was I don't think the final attack on it in *Jedi* was as impressive as the one at the climax of *Star Wars*. For all the technical brilliance it just didn't have the same emotional charge. In fact I don't think any of the space sequences in *Jedi*, though possibly more "state of the art", had the same breath-taking excitement as the chase through the asteroid belt in *Empire*...

But the biggest disappointment in *Jedi* is the treatment of Darth Vader. By revealing him to be nothing but a wimpy-looking British character actor under his mask the character's effectiveness has been all but destroyed (how can one look at *Star Wars* and *Empire* in the same light again?). It was a huge mistake to show his face at all. The whole thing should have been done off-screen with just Luke's reactions shown...

One last quibble: The Emperor (another artistic misjudgement – he had the dramatic reality of a cardboard cut-out) is dead. Death Star 2 is in little pieces and most of the Imperial Fleet has been zapped, but what about the rest of the Empire? Surely a galaxy-wide power structure consists of more than just a few spaceships and an emperor? For example, there must be thousands of Imperial garrisons on all the occupied planets.

No, for all its surface dazzle *Return of the Jedi* is profoundly disappointing. Lucas missed a marvellous opportunity to take the science fantasy genre into new areas. He hasn't fulfilled the promise of *Star Wars*; he's taken the safe, easy way out by simply remaking *Star Wars*. What a pity.

## BOOK WORLD

A *Starburst* Review Column by  
Chris Charles

s civilization as we know it coming to an end? It would seem

So from this month's clutch of books, the prevailing theme is *Things Fall Apart*. *Hello America* by J.G. Ballard (Granada, £1.50) is the best fun of the bunch, being an odyssey through an abandoned and arid continent in typical Ballardian fashion. Ballard has always been a true original, his fictions quite unlike those of any other writer. But while critics have often praised him for his powerful imagery and his stark evocations of modern madnesses, not much has been made of the humour in his writing. This has grown more pronounced in recent years, and *Hello America* is probably his funniest book to date.

The novel follows an expedition from Europe which lands on the east coast of an America previously abandoned by its inhabitants after a global energy crisis. Climatic changes have turned the eastern half of the continent into a desert, with lizards and cacti adorning the streets of New York City. Later the expedition reaches the lush tropical rainforests of Arizona and Nevada, where they discover that a new American government has been set up at Las Vegas under President Charles Manson. The travellers also meet up with an inventor, Dr Fleming, who has produced robot versions of



several past American presidents. A typical example of Ballard's droll, laconic humour follows:

"Around him the Presidents were going down like skittle, the compression chambers in their balance units upset by the explosions. Madison, Coolidge, Adams and Reagan lost their footing and fell to the floor. . . Only Gerald Ford had kept his balance, but in a gesture of solidarity he deliberately stumbled and threw himself to the ground."

This is a highly amusing novel which cleverly satirizes many aspects of modern American culture. A sense of jollity pervades the whole proceedings, as if Ballard had great fun writing it. Newcomers to Ballard's work could do worse than start here.

A more sombre novel on a similar theme is *A Secret History of Time To Come* by Robie Macaulay (Corgi, £1.95). Here we are even further into the future in an America where all the cities have been abandoned and people live in small rural communities with only the vaguest knowledge of the technological civilization which preceded them. The USA as we know it today fell apart after an inter-racial war which we witness through the eyes of a contemporary black man. He dreams of a rider travelling through forests, and this turns out to be the future man, Kinkaid, who is embarked on a journey across the continent to investigate an old Forefather settlement: the city of Chicago.

This is an intelligent and well-written novel which enjoyed

even though it contains little original material and is even slightly old-fashioned in the traditional manner of its storytelling. The writing is crisp and evocative, and there are some very effective passages when Kinkaid enters towns and cities and old buildings which seem very strange to him but are perfectly recognizable to us. It's an atmospheric novel, with a strong sense of continent that has reverted to wilderness, the cities crumbling and overgrown. Full marks also to Corgi for the attractive cover which they've produced for the book.

In Naomi Mitchison's *Not By Bread Alone* (Marion Boyars, £7.95) global disaster once again lurks in the background, or at least social upheavals of an unprecedented nature. De-

ing to the fans of the programme and it looked as if *Doctor Who* had no future. Of course, this was not to be and before long the same columnists were announcing "A New Doctor Who Faces the Daleks Tonight. In comes 46-year-old former Shakespearean actor Patrick Troughton. The change over will be explained by saying that Doctor Who has been made a few hundred years younger." To console readers a huge picture of Mr Troughton appeared, calmly blowing on a recorder.

*The Daily Telegraph* said of Patrick Troughton: "Tougher Doctor Who is chosen." Reporter Norman Hare was told by Sydney Newman head of BBC Drama: "Our problem in choosing the new Doctor Who was very

This month *TV Zone* continues its look back at newspaper coverage of the BBC's most successful science-fiction series, *Doctor Who*. One enemy of the first Doctor who has been rather neglected over the years are the Voords. Yet at the time they received the usual array of publicity. Douglas Marlbrough announced their arrival in 1966. "They are the brainchild of Terry Nation and their rubber look was designed by director John Gorrie and costume supervisor Daphne Dare. The Voords are played by actors encased in thick rubber costumes. They have the homed heads of king size beetles, key-shaped protuberances on their faces and hands like giant claws." "They do not appear in every episode", Variety Lambert, the producer added. "They're only one of many menaces."

It's interesting to note just how seriously the newspapers took the *Doctor Who* saga. Columnist Hugh Cleave reporting from Warsaw used the Sensorites telepathic communication devices from the story Strangers in Space to illustrate a scientific method of producing thought messages, the ability to contact someone without speaking or sending signals. It involved the use of "electromagnetic rays" and a "sixth sense" apparatus. However, it vanished with the finality of the Sensorites themselves.

One army of aliens that received a great deal of attention were the Draivins, blue-eyed blondes in green tunics and white leather boots, with only one aim in life - to shoot folk full of holes with their ray guns. Brian Dean interviewed William Emms the man who created the new threat to *Doctor Who*. "I originally wrote them as men. Then somebody suggested it would be more interesting to make them beautiful women. They are not interested in the opposite sex. In fact, they are created in test-tubes." As if to back up this cold heartless image of a photograph accompanied the text of three formidable looking females.

Another thing that journalists loved to do was catch up with famous TV personalities in every day situations, driving their cars or visiting the supermarket and the *Doctor Who* monsters were no exception. Photographs covered the pages of the *National's* showing Zarbi waiting at bus stops, Dalek replicas at Chiesman's Department store in London, Daleks opening hospital fetes, Daleks being delivered to Dr Barnardo's Homes, film Daleks being pushed down high streets by lucky competition winners and even a Dalek play suit posing at the London Palladium with host Norman Vaughan.

In fact this special attention for the Daleks prompted Douglas Marlbrough to present an article entitled "Dead, But They Won't Lie Down" with four photographs of Dalek in various stages of falling over. "The BBC has made a New Year resolution, to bring the Daleks back to life in 1965." Terry Nation pretended to be most upset by this news. "They're amoral - there's no goodness about them," he said, "I can't understand why children like them." But as Mr Marlbrough was quick to point out, "The BBC see them as first class ammunition in the fight with ITV for teatime audiences."

When a real life catastrophe happened in *Doctor Who* then the newspapers were always the first to report it. "Doctor Who to quit", read one such headline in *The Daily Mail*. Reading with the same urgency as the news of a resigning Prime Minister, the Mail told how "it has been a great strain for William Hartnell over the last three years. The serial demands a great deal from him as an actor. He has often said how he would like to leave and return to the theatre". A BBC official added, "We are very sorry to lose Mr Hartnell. He's won a huge following from younger viewers." The news was certainly shatter-



## TV Z

by Richard



velopments in genetic engineering enable staple crops to be grown in abundance and hence solve the world's food problem. This, however, alters the economic and political structures of many countries, and when one particular crop proves to be poisonous the new foods are abandoned by several countries. The main problem with this novel is that it's too short, with the result that a proper balance is not struck between the central characters and the large-scale changes which are occurring worldwide. We are told that such-and-such has happened instead of being shown it, so that much of the novel has the air of reportage. A pity, because this could have been an interesting theme if it had been effectively dramatized.

A global breakdown of society also lurks in the background of *Yesterday's Men* by George Turner (Faber, £7.95), a book which cannot be faulted for its ambition but which is spoiled by its tone. It's the third in a series of novels set in the new world of the 21st century which has been created out of the ashes of the old, and it describes a sociological study of the nature of violence which involves sending men into a jungle under conditions designed to resemble those of New Guinea during World War II. This is hardly intended as a serious work of speculative fiction, but I was uncomfortable with the story from the outset. There's a certain know-it-allness in the style and a feeling that the author is constantly intruding on his characters instead of allowing them to lead fictional lives of

this own. The result was that I didn't care much what happened to any of them and found the reading of the novel something of a chore; there's a preachiness about it which is distinctly off-putting.

*Falling Angel* by William Hjortsberg (Arrow, £1.80) is more down-to-earth, at least at the start. It begins as a traditional detective novel set in New York City during the 1950s which has private eye Harry Angel searching for a missing man. But soon hints of hoodoo and black magic creep in, with ritual murders and sacrifices. The story has a good sense of period and an effective surprise ending with a suitable macabre flavour. But I couldn't help feeling that there should have been more drama and suspense along the way.

# ZONE

Holliss



difficult because we decided to make considerable changes in the personality of the character. We believe we have found exactly the man we want."

After Patrick Troughton came Jon Pertwee, but it was during the Tom Baker incarnation, that *The Daily Express* went to town with a report by Douglas Orgill on the men behind the scenes at *Doctor Who*, the then resident producer Graham Williams, scriptwriter Douglas Adams and Designer Tony Harding. Orgill discovered that each story began with a conference between Williams, Adams and one of the series writers. "We call it a what-if? conference" Williams explained. "Basically it's for trying out ideas on each other. You know, what if the

suns green—does that affect your skin colour? Or what if your on a silicon based planet—do you have bathrooms." Around the walls of Graham Williams office are letters from viewers, observes Mr Orgill. "Of course not all of them are from kids," said Williams. "We had one from a professor, asking where the Doctor had got his ideas from on the implosion of matter—because they were very interesting. We had to tell him it was just Douglas Adams here, bashing away with his typewriter at 2am one morning."

Orgill concluded his look at *Doctor Who* by visiting Tony Harding at the BBC's special effects headquarters. There he found K-9's creator surrounded by a sea friend, a headless Yeti and two or three Daleks. "The more I see this one," Harding said stroking K-9. "The more I wish I'd spent more time with him. His steering isn't all it might be."

Quite recently the Newspapers reported on the terror in *Doctor Who*. "Who do you think you are, scaring my innocent child," read one headline accusation, when a *Daily Express* reporter met script editor for the series Bob Holmes. Holmes quickly pointed out that *Doctor Who* is no longer a children's programme. "Parents would be terribly irresponsible to leave a six year old child to watch it alone," he said. "It's geared to the intelligent 14 year old and I wouldn't let any child under 10 see it." Holmes was speaking from the BBC's warehouse in Acton, the home of many disused monsters. According to him the producer Graham Williams and star Tom Baker don't really want the Daleks back at all. Baker describes them as "dreary blundering things, moving on one level and talking on one note." Holmes argues that from a script point of view "They're no great conversationalists." Williams agrees. "The Daleks have become a tv legend, they're hard to repeat. The odd times they have been brought back, they've made a tremendous impact on the first night, all the little brothers, who haven't seen them, watching with the teenage kids who remember them. But after that curiosity show the ratings soon drop off. So unless we find a terrific plot to support them, they won't be back." (Where have we heard that before?)

"What horrifies far more is the occasional flesh of monster-bits and pieces of one," continued Williams. "People are frightened by what might come round the corner or in at the window. We're not in the business to harm children. We learned our lesson years ago, with some plastic daffodils which killed just by spitting at people. We didn't consider that people actually have plastic daffodils in their homes. They caused screaming nightmares so we scrapped them. You must never attack the security of a child in its home. If you make something nasty, you don't stick it in the nursery."

However this report on the scary aspects of watching *Doctor Who* is not new and Bob Holmes would have done well to have read a *Daily Mail* report that appeared on August 5th 1965 entitled "When A Child in the Dark comes Face to Face with the Monsters of Doctor Who," by Christopher Underwood. "Are the Daleks scaring children out of their cinema seats?" asks Mr Underwood. To back him up a psychiatrist calls them, "sinister, relentless, disturbing and highly detrimental. These horrible things are enough to upset a stable child let alone one who is not so well balanced. Even adults are likely to be disturbed by them." To support these feelings *Mail* photographer David Davies pictures four children cowering in fear, although as if to appease the masses the fifth photo shows a girl yawning. "Bored to Death?" asks the caption.





Welcome to an irregular series of columns in which I'll be looking at the latest records from the world of fantasy films. From the start I'd like to make it plain that yours truly is NO musician and that those fortunate enough to have heard me sing have often commented, 'Aaargghhhh...' So in this column you'll find no technical jargon whatsoever. The only general criteria attached to the records under review will be whether the music stands on its own, as a piece of music. So... on with the show!

It's looking less and less likely that we will ever see David Cronenberg's critically acclaimed, if publicly shunned, *Videodrome* in this country. A shame. I've always found the young Canadian's films intensely personal and herowing cinematic experiences. Guess we'll have to make do with the book-of-film and hope the movie at least turns up on the video release lists... now that would be ironic. But the music is available, right now, on Varese Sarabande (SV81173) and while an

## AUDIODROME

### Starburst Record Reviews by Leslie Ford

many didn't, finding it muddled and confused, it isn't Don's fault! However Coscarelli has no such reservations with Lee Holdridge's score and I don't either. It's a full blooded orchestral score which manages to capture a genuine sense of majesty and myth which Basil Polodouris' compositions failed to do once divorced from the film of *Conan the Barbarian*.

Holdridge composed and orchestrated 80 minutes of music for the film in just over two weeks, which considering the scope and quality of the music is something of a superhuman effort. Approximately 37 minutes has made it to the record (Varese Sarabande SV81174) and rather than mixing it down from the original 24 track the record was produced from the 3 track magnetic master. In common language this means that what you hear on the record is a lot closer to what

album is pretty good too and considering that Carpenter admits to not being a trained musician and much of the rest of the record is a reworking of the main theme, *Halloween 2* is listenable, if often sombre and disorientating aural treat.

Who is Harry Bromley-Davenport and why am I about to say these terrible things about him? Mr Davenport is the director of the cheap little SF schlockwork, *Xtro* which came and went without causing so much as a ripple a couple of months ago. And now comes the soundtrack album of the same name. There ought to be a law against film directors writing the music for their own films, particularly when they come out sounding like *Xtro*, a thoroughly unpleasant experience. More synthesised doodlings I'm afraid. I'm not really sure why record companies pick up this sort of drek for release, unless it's to satiate the appetite of all those soundtrack buffs who buy records, maybe listen to them once and then file them away and sleep easy at night knowing they've got everything. There's a lot of truly awful noises to be heard on this album, which if it's meant to be "mood music" succeeds admirably. Exactly how I can describe the mood, I'm not sure. It made my brain hurt within minutes end to stay sane I spent the next 40 odd minutes thinking of alternate track titles. I'm afraid the only printable once



import, should be orderable from your local diskery if you tell them to get in touch with That's Entertainment Records in Covent Garden. The score is the work of Howard Shore, a name unfamiliar to me, at least, and like so much fantasy film music today is performed ("Realized" it says on the sleeve) on an array of synthesizers and computers. *Videodrome* is pretty depressing stuff to listen to and often while listening to it galloping around at 33 1/3 RPMs I found myself thinking of anything but the sounds emanating from the speakers. "Thud... thud... whirr... thud... hummm... hummm..." In a way the soundtrack reminded me of some of the *musique concrete* an old music teacher forced me to listen to once in a fit of modernism. (Affectionately known as "Fish Lips"), for obvious reasons, she felt she was giving the class a treat - a switch from Bach and Beethoven and letting us listen in her own way that she was "with it". With it, she wasn't and we all emerged with throbbing headaches! *Videodrome* isn't quite that bad. There are a few patches where you can tap your feet, if slowly, and one could always wonder how long it took to write the programme for the synth... or do the washing up. Divorced from the celluloid images, which from all reports are nothing short of startling, the soundtrack is a turgid experience. File under *Music to Commot Suicide By*.

On the other hand, I really quite liked the soundtrack for *The Beastmaster*. Don Coscarelli's sword and sorcery epic. The album must mark a first of a kind, for right there in the sleeve notes the writer/director says, "The *Beastmaster* was a turning point in my career. It was the first picture I made without having creative control. I disagreed with many creative decisions which were made without my consultation and I did not have final cut." If you didn't think the movie was up to much, and

you hear in the film, something quite uncommon when it comes to film soundtracks. While listening to this record at my usual preferred volume (loud) I noticed a small note at the bottom of the sleeve which advised me to turn the volume up for best results. So I did. After I dislodged myself from the plaster on the opposite wall I realised that yes, *The Beastmaster* was a damn fine score and even better when played at top volume. Moody, heroic and spectacular by turns the record comes highly recommended by Don Coscarelli and myself. But Personal Hi-fi (you know, those little boxes one wears strapped to the body with a pair of headphones attached to the cranium, the great anti-social invention of the 80s) users be warned: Watch that volume control if listening to a tape of *The Beastmaster* - you just might end up wearing your ears somewhere in the middle of your brain.

Wasn't *Halloween 2* terrible? All that stalk and slash and not a modicum of logic in sight. The soundtrack has been available since the film's release (Varese Sarabande SV81152) and comes recommended for one reason and one reason only. The score for John Carpenter's first *Halloween* ranks among the most highly sought after film scores, topped only by the music for *Assault on Precinct 13* (and when is somebody going to show the initiative to release that and make themselves some money at the same time?). At around £6 *Halloween 2* is worth the investment just to obtain the 4 minute 27 second Main Title theme used in both films, although for the second outing it was re-recorded and "cleaned up" by Carpenter and Alan Howarth who, incidentally also contributed his talents to the *Videodrome* soundtrack. Synths plink and the Prophet Marks 5 and 10 add great swirling nightmare chords in a simple but completely effective wall of sound. The rest of the

is "Extraterrestrials Farting Under Water". For soundtrack collectors and interested mesochists the technical details are: *Xtro* Composed and performed by Harry Bromley-Davenport, That's Entertainment Records (TER 1052).

And finally to the *Twilight Zone*. This, the first of a planned six volumes, includes work by Jerry Goldsmith, Bernard Hermann, Franz Waxman, Nathan Van Cleave and the album is rounded out by the haunting Main and End Titles which preceded and closed every episode of the series and were the work of Marius Constant. I found this record somewhat disappointing with only the score for *Walking Distance* by Hermann coming anywhere within expectations. The Goldsmith track, *The Invaders*, an episode which featured Agnes Moorhead battling invading aliens, is strident and shrieky, and while it no doubt did the TZ episode a great deal of good, on record it is just irritating. Franz Waxman's piece, *The Sixteen Millimetre Shrine*, is chiefly of interest in that Waxman also wrote the score for *Sunset Boulevard* - a film which has a striking resemblance to the episode in question. The previously never-available-for-before-on-disc (!) Nathan Van Cleave's contribution is *Perseus to Dream*, which while no great shakes is an entertaining piece of 50s schlock, which reminded me somewhat of the sort of music that used to accompany Richard Carlson's adventures in the great Universal SF thrillers of the 50s.

I suppose these *Twilight Zone* records will fill some interesting gaps of some of the now-better known composers of today. But unfortunately without the glowing monochromatic images which accompanied the lithe scripts of *The Twilight Zone*, these scores are little more than nostalgic reminders. File under: Well Meant. (Varese Sarabande SV81171.)



# CANNES GAMES

Starburst Special Report from the Cannes Film Festival

**Every year since opening its doors for business, Starburst has had a representative at the Cannes Festival and has reported on all the movie projects screened, announced or hoped for during the two weeks or so of Mediterranean Movie Madness. But rarely has Starburst reported on the actual Festival itself. This year Tony Crawley, with the help of another Paris-based friend of Starburst, Frederic Alvert Levy, rectifies this with the following Report.**



According to a local news item, two Danes from the Aarhus Concert Hall were at Cannes "to research festival organisation". That must have taken three minutes. Five, at most. There was no organisation. In fact, a week before the 36th annual film festival opened, it was damn near cancelled. Nothing was ready for a traumatic year when everything for the annual visitor was completely different. A new Palais for the competition films. New Press facilities, brilliantly designed, if frustration was the name of the game. New screening times that blew up in everyone's face and like the abysmal projection systems had to be repaired swiftly. And even the patron of our favourite bar had retired. . . .

Before long the frightful Palais had been

named The Bunker (it's like a slab of London's South Bank concrete transported to sunnier climes) and Cannes had a new spelling. It became *le festival des Pannes*. That's French for breakdown, as you may need to know if you have trouble on the autoroutes heading for the summer sun. Pannes - confusion - languid. These were among the politest comments about the festival which revolting medical students did their best to disrupt, halt or even cancel - in a mild flashback to the fury of May '68.

For one glorious moment during a beach lunch, it looked as if they'd succeeded and all our problems with the totally inadequate Bunker were over. It appeared to be on fire! Unfortunately, the students were merely making pyres of tyres. That led to tear-gas charges by the *flics* and as

the sun set on the Bunker, it was daubed with blood red paint. As if Tom Savini had cycled by.

The paint was most appropriate. Fake blood usually signifies fantasy films, right? Amid the rows over a Palais not even built for a film festival but conventions, rotten projection, seating and sound, the film market buried in a basement far from scanty sun and other beach scanties (yes, Annie Ample and Edy Williams were back and, er, front), it was a fortnight our kind of people did their best to salvage.

Year by year, the Cannes circus proves the ever-increasing sway out genre holds on the film world. (Peter Fonda has lately become a superhero who fell to earth in a Japanese sf frolic). This year's Entries - Entries mind you, not marketer stuff where we always rule - featured Mel Gibson, fast on his way to rocking Burt Toupee off his No 1 star pinnale. . . . Sigourney Weaver, alienated no longer. . . . The David Bowie in four films, including his final 1973 concert at *Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders From Mars*, although the on-screen title reads *David Bowie and . . . Possession's* 1981 Best Actress (hah!) Isabella Adjani playing another mad woman in her sleep. . . . *Time After Time's* Mary Steenburgen sharing her U.S. entry (which should remain nameless) with the CE3K kid, Cary Guffey (ten now and blond no more), Ike Eisenmann, similarly all grown up from Disney's *Witch Mountain*, and Peter Coyote, Keys in E.T., and now that we can see him better, something of a new Jimmy Stewart. . . . Klaus Kinski's daughter, which I'm afraid is fast becoming the kindest way to refer to cat person but no actress Nastassia. . . . and films directed by Peter (Picnic at Hanging Rock) Weir and Russia's Andrei (Solaris) Tarkovsky. . . .

Out of competition, but still getting the big Bunker treatment - Tony Scott's *The Hunger* had a midnight screening, which you had to break a leg - your own or somebody else's - to get into. . . . and John Badham's pro-video, anti-nuke fantasy, *War Games*, closed the fortnight.

Not bad, huh?

Well. . . . Tragically, most of the movies in the contest (including some of the above; I mean, forget the new Steenburgen, Adjani, Kinski and Tarkovsky movies) were just awful. Weak-kneed. Heartless. Worse; soul-less. Those that were any good were given out-of-competition status, strictly a political ploy in the case of Hong Kong's trenchant and moving *Boat People*, in case France annoyed Vietnam (though it didn't mind upsetting Turkey last year or Brazil this time). Otherwise, they were simply left out of the eventual awards which proved as weak, meek, mild and riddled with obvious compromises as the festival itself.

On the other hand, one cannot be too harsh about such an intellectual film event which gave the main jury award to. . . . Monty Python!

Overall Best Film, though, was Japan's *Ballad of Narayama*, while everyone had been sure it would be Bowie's main movie, the British-made, Japanese-directed POW tragedy, *Merry Christmas*, Mr Lawrence. Although flawed in its flashbacks, this is an important film, the first time a Japanese director (Nagisa Oshima) has made a war film - any war - showing the enemy. In many respects, it'll mean more to Japan than Britain. Odd to see Bowie as a prisoner of the Japanese today and all camped up in Nipponese glitter costumes as yesterday's Ziggy Stardust. Maybe the NME didn't get it all wrong when they



called Bowie "the last of a dying breed who'll live forever" (sic).

No way Bowie would win the acting honours, swiped from the very grasp of Robert Duval in Cannes by an incredible EMI foul-up. Duval, of I-love-the-smell-of-napalm fame, was voted Best Actor until the Jury learned *Tender Mercies* has been at an earlier festival in the year. That's just not on by Cannes rules. So a black mark for EMI for losing Duval the prize which went to Italy's Gian Maria Volonte, instead, for the Franco-Swiss *Death of Mario Ricci*.

Best Actress was Hanna Schuylla, a German, well, it was the first year of *The Bunker!* She barely earned it, despite her nudity in Marco Ferreri's story of everyday Italian incest, *Piera's Story*. The jury, headed by William Styron, author of *Jophy's Choice* (so he should know about best actresses and director) couldn't settle on a Best Director and created a Creation award for French Robert Bresson (among the most booted film-makers of the fortnight) and Tarkovsky, who had better luck with his Stanilas Lem-inspired *Solaris* in 1972 than *Nostalgia*, his first movie outside Russia – and Italy's third win while Hollywood got nothing.

No supporting acting awards either, which increased the farce. Styron's band should have given either the supporting actor or actress trophy to Linda Hunt, the 4ft 9in, 80lb American wonder who plays a man, the dwarf Billy Kwan, pulling Mel Gibson's strings during *The Year of Living Dangerously*. Maybe the jury didn't realise Billy was a woman. Few people do.

Director Peter Weir told us he chose Linda because, quite simply, he couldn't find a man suitable. The men he tested with Mel (or himself in Mel's role) didn't so much act as compete, because of their size. Linda is almost political about her size and how she's judged because of it, yet was terrified 95% of the time in the filming. "The film has transformed her life," says Weir. "Her life at 38 was laid out to some extent with doing theatre. When she saw this part, she believed – as I did – that if she pulled it off, it would open up film work. She'd either fail magnificently – or succeed. If you fail, no one cares. She knew all of that. It was, yeah, a terrifying gamble. But I don't know what would have happened if I hadn't found her."

Linda's first film was *Popeye* (1980). She played the tiny mother of the giant Oxblood Oakeast. She couldn't get to Cannes. Too busy

making *Dune* in Mexico with... oh, everyone: Max Von Sydow, Silvana Managano, Francesca Annis, José Ferrer, Brad Dourif, Jurgen Prochnow, Dean Stockwell, Sting, Sian Phillips, Freddie Jones and even *Popeye's* Bluto, Paul Smith.

Peter Weir admitted he chose Sigourney Weaver for his film because of *Alien*. "Which I liked. I thought I'd use her one day and I needed a woman of strength and femininity." And Mel? Well, they'd teamed before on *Galipoli*. Even so, "twas the old road warrior that did it for Weir. I've since seen Mel on stage and he's a very good stage actor. But he's a screen star! Having seen *Mad Max*, I came out – as one does – 'Well, there he is!'"

And Mel got the full-fledged star treatment on his short Cannes trip. His only problem was comparing Weir and George Miller. "How can I put this bluntly without offending anyone!" he laughed. "George is very much a mathematician. He kinda works with formulas and chemicals and numbers. Puts it together in a formula kinda way so that he gets an enormous chain reaction. An explosion! Peter, I think, it comes from the inside of him. Somewhere. They both achieve excellence but in a totally different way."

With that, Mel flew off to Tahiti and the mutinous *HMS Bounty*. He's due for *Bounty II*, next year. Inbetween, he has a Hollywood date for *The Running Man*. Worth running to as his running women should be Lesley Anne Down, "Nasty" Kinski and the new Mrs Bryan Brown, Rachel Ward. Nice work if you can get it. And Mel, just now, is getting it all.

David Bowie made it clear he preferred his *Mr Lawrence* film to *The Hunger*. He likes Tony Scott's baroque style, but director Oshima has turned his head around about acting, which had never satisfied Bowie. Basically what attracted him to Ridley Scott's bequest to Tony was not just another weirdo role but working with Hollywood's make-up expert, Dick Smith. "He's done all my favourite ugly faces in films. He's tremendous. He can regale you for hours with anecdotes." He needs to when applying those hours of ageing make-up on a star. I'm not sure if it matters which star... Bowie at 200 in *The Hunger* looks a complete clone of Dick's work on Dustin Hoffman at 121 in *Little Big Man*. The same mould, Dick?

Bowie's fourth film on show was a jape – a cameo he shot for fun while on holiday in Mexico for the *Yellowbeard* pirate romp with most of the Pythons, Cheech and Chong and

the late Marty Feldman. Now that he's more keen on acting, Bowie is sorry he didn't test for the *Amadeus* film. He's due to make Robert Altman's *Easter Egg Hunt*. Then I think he'll move into directing. He's started by making his own *Let's Dance* video and plans a longer movie with his rockin' mate, Iggy Pop. Even so, between one of his 15-minute interviews – "not a minute more or less" – he ran into Paul Mayersberg, co-writer of *Mr Lawrence* and scenarist of their Nic Roeg film, *Man Who Fell To Earth*. And Bowie said to Mayersberg: "Let's make another film with Nic." Yes, please!

Everyone, even the French fantasy crowd who had him one of their own, had high hopes for the new work from *Diva's*

Jean-Jacques Beineix. *Moon in the Gutter* was put down by its star, Gerard Depardieu, as a film in the sewer. The incredible Bulk is not wrong! It's a Louma Crane stinker! J.J.B. kept rabbiting about a fusion of visuals and music. Fine, if he had a story. The film's real story is of yet another director falling for "Nasty" Kinski's beauty of over brittle talent. She says she's more interested in directors than stories. Sure looks that way. *Gutter* is strictly a two-hour commercial for a new cologne called... Anguish. And the anguished J.J.B. needs to rescue his act fast or he's a goner before he's a comer.

Similarly softened was that last bison of the Hollywood race, Martin Ritt. His *Cross Creek* looks great, nothing happens is all. The inept casting of thoroughly modern Mary Steenburgen for a period piece doesn't help. Mary was a big find, an Oscar-winner and all, when she married Malcolm McDowell after *Time After Time* (1979). Now he's the one back on top in *Blue Thunder* over one half of John Badham's amazing duopoly, unequaled even by St Spielberg. The other half is *WarGames*. They're Badham's first fantasies since his *Dracula* (1979). I get the feeling he's just visiting our neighbourhood. He can make a mean movie. That's why he was brought in like a heart-surgeon to save both films when their original directors were fired. But Badham, too, has that soft-centre trouble. Spielbergitis, is it?

*WarGames* is a good film. No E.T., but good. Matthew Broderick – a Marty Ritt find – is like Elliott at 18 and supposedly as lonely (like E.T., again according to director comments, not on-screen events). He accidentally plugs his computer into the massive (a WOPR, in fact!) computer of NORAD, America's main defence system. He starts playing Theronuclear War with WOPR. Just a game. For them both. Except, as the NORAD screens start display Russian forces' building up, the top brass think it's for real and start taking action... Yeah, cracking stuff.

Having secured the E.T. slot – last film of the fest – Badham and MGM/UA were hoping to repeat the way E.T. had stern, esoteric, intellectual critics weeping, cherishing. Every E.T. story told that story from Cannes. Well, MGM blew it. They showed the media the film at E.T. time – 8am. (Yawn!) Then they staged their Press Conference at 4.30pm when most of the Press had flown the coop, except us fantasy chickens. The reason they didn't hold it straight after the film, Spielberg style? John Badham didn't arrive in Cannes until 2pm. He should have flown in a day earlier.

When his team took to the platform, there was nearly more of them than us. Yablans then nearly yanked the conflag. The other ET saved us. American's *Entertainment Today* tv show. They'd had their cameras ready to roll. Well, okay, said Yablans, so long as you don't show how small the audience is. Rotten planning but not Cannes' fault this once – Hollywood's.



**PYTHON RIGS JURY!** was the best headline in the dull Cannes film dailies once the Pythons arrived, *helas*, minus John Cleese – for their first entry in any world festival, *The Meaning of Life*. “We can’t lost,” chorused Messrs Jones, Idle, Palin, Chapman and Gilliam. “We’ve paid the jury a large sum of money!” Terry Jones (also the film’s increasingly accomplished director) flew back later to collect the Jury’s Grand Prix and told them, “Your money’s behind the wash basin!”

Truth is, the Pythons didn’t expect to win anything. They didn’t even want to, said Jones. Obviously such supreme anti-Establishmentites don’t go around currying favour with even the movie Establishment. Or not with what Cleese calls “a cheap, last-minute, rag bag of unconnected sketches!” The film was made, owned up Mike Palin, for money basically “and frankly not even enough of that.” That they won the only award deserved and applauded at Cannes, was no vast surprise. Among the jury was Paris producer Gilbert de Goldschmidt. He’s the guy who first introduced Monty P. to French cinemas.



At the swanky Python party, by the way, the entire menu comprised fish dishes, including the film’s killer – salmon mousse – as befits a film which Terry Jones calls “the universal story of life itself, from birth to the grave – even beyond the grave – as seen from the point of view of six fish, not one of which is a haddock.” The Pythons play the fish as well in the movie’s funniest effect. “We had huge fish bodies attached to our heads,” explains Eric Idle. “It’s the first fish I ever played and I hope the last.” In all, Eric worked out that he played ten men in the *Life*, four women, one fish, Noel Coward and half a tiger.

On this great form, I trust we don’t have to wait a further five years before the Pythons’ next outing. “It’s a pity this gargantuan fireworks was not saved for the end of the festival,” commented French critic Michel Perez, “when people will be wondering whether life and the cinema still has any meaning.”

**Footnote:** As we left, we learned about a new production before Hollywood cameras that sums up the Cannes games, the film game... and writing about it. The title? *The Cheque Is In The Post* ●



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